University of Alberta

Junior High Girls
and
Free Time Physical Activity Decision Making

By

Marianne Elizabeth Waters ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Department of Physical Education and Recreation

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the process through which junior high school girls make decisions to participate or not to participate in free time physical activity. The grounded theory method was used. Data were collected through interviews with nine junior high girls and analyzed using the grounded theory techniques of Strauss & Corbin (1990). In a focus group, the girls' responded to the findings.

The informants identified parents, friends, time and scheduling, opportunity, enjoyment, and self-confidence as essential factors; and experience and physical potential as modifying factors in making the decision to try or not to try a free time physical activity. In addition to these factors, leader, match, feeling successful, and potential were essential factors in making the decision to commit or not to commit to a free time physical activity. Modifying factors for decisions regarding committing were doing well and growth and improvement.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

It is important to understand how girls make decisions regarding participation in physical activity because girls' low levels of physical activity raise concern for their health. Research indicates that physical inactivity increases the risk of developing cancer (Blair, Kohl, Paffenbarger, Clark, Cooper, Gibbons, 1989), cardiovascular disease (Blair et al.; Bouchard, Shephard, Stephens, Sutton & McPherson, 1990; Giel, 1988; McKeag, 1991), obesity (Giel; Gortmaker, 1990; Kirk-Gardner, Crossman, & Eyjolfsson, 1992), diabetes (Giel), back problems and osteoporosis (Baer et al., 1992; Grimston, Morrison, Harder, & Hanley, 1992; Heyward, 1991; Schaafsma, 1992). Physical inactivity not only increases the risk of developing many health problems, it also does not facilitate healthy growth and development (Armstrong & Davies, 1984; Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation, 1988; Kerr, 1988; McKeag).

Research indicates that there is a substantial decrease in physical activity during the junior high years (Canada Fitness Survey, 1983; King & Coles, 1992; Saskatchewan Growth Study, cited in Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation, 1988; Stephens & Craig, 1990). In the Canada Fitness Survey, less than 32% of 15-

19-year-old females achieved a recommended level of aerobic fitness compared to 73% of 7-9-year-old girls. These figures indicate that, at some point between the ages of 10 and 14, a large number of girls decreased their aerobic activity levels. These results suggest that during their junior high years girls are making important decisions regarding their participation in physical activity. Therefore, in order to develop strategies that may increase girls' physical activity levels and thus potentially improve their health, it is important to understand how junior high school girls make decisions regarding participation or non-participation in physical activity.

Kotler and Roberto (1989) advised that in order to plan a strategy to change behavior (i.e., to promote increased physical activity), one must first understand the patterns of behavior and the decision-making characteristics of those to whom the strategy will be targeted (i.e., junior high school girls). Patterns of behavior are known. Beside declining fitness levels, health surveys (Health of Canada's Youth, Canada's Health Promotion Survey, Campbell's Survey, and Canada Fitness Survey) documented a number of disturbing trends in Canadian girls' physical activity participation. First, at any given age during adolescence, females in Canada are less active than their male counterparts (King & Coles, 1992; Siggner, 1988; Stephens & Craig, 1990; Stephens, 1993). Second, females in the 15-19-year-old age group report low levels of physical activity (Canada Fitness Survey, 1983; King & Coles; Stephens & Craig). Third, research indicates that there is a substantial decrease in physical activity during the junior high years (Canada Fitness Survey; King & Coles; Saskatchewan Growth Study, cited in Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation, 1988; Stephens & Craig). Finally, young women's participation in physical activity decreased between 1985 and 1990 (Stephens).

While patterns of behavior are known, little is known about how girls make decisions regarding physical activity participation. In most previous research on girls' involvement in physical activity, questionnaires were designed on the assumption that researchers had identified all possible alternatives. Thus, the researchers assumed that if girls chose from among these alternatives an accurate description of girls' attitudes toward physical activity and the factors that influence involvement would result. However, interventions developed in response to these studies have not increased girls' physical activity to the desired level (Hoffman, 1995). This finding suggests that not all of the influences which operate in girls' decisions regarding participation in physical activity have been addressed (Hoffman). Some information necessary for the development of effective interventions is missing. Lewko and Greendorfer (1988) suggested that more qualitative work is needed to assess girls' own explanations of why they do or do not like certain activities.

It is particularly important to understand how girls make decisions regarding physical activity participation in light of the suggestion that these decisions are likely to result in the development of health habits which will persist into adult life (Perry et al., 1990). This study provides information on how junior high girls make decisions regarding participation and non-participation in physical activity. This information will allow for more effective planning of appropriate interventions to increase physical activity in junior high girls. Through the potential to generate effective interventions, this study may also advance understanding of how girls can play a role in improving and maintaining their own health (i.e., self responsibility). This is important because although their physical activity levels were decreasing, 79% percent of 10-11-year-old girls and 86% of 14-15-year-old girls reported that they wanted to participate more in physical activity (Canada Fitness Survey, 1983).

Because health habits developed during the teenage years often persist into adult life (Perry et al., 1990), girls' decisions to be inactive represent a significant potential risk to health. Additionally, leisure and recreational activities enjoyed in youth have an impact on adult activities because often these activities are continued into adulthood (Haywood, 1993). Moreover, these experiences are the foundation upon which attitudes and behaviors for adult activities are built (Hultsman & Kaufman, 1990, cited in Hultsman, 1993a; Kleiber, Larson, & Csikszentmihalyi, 1986).

Learning how junior high girls make decisions regarding participation and non-participation in physical activity is important because health habits are still being developed at that age (Cohen, Brownell, & Felix, 1990). Thus, there is still potential to use information on decision making to build effective interventions to increase physical activity levels before high school, when health habits become stable (Cohen et al., Schultz & Smoll, 1986).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the process through which junior high girls make decisions to participate or not to participate in free time physical activity using the grounded theory method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). "Free time" referred to time when they were not in school.

Research Questions

The research questions were "How do junior high girls make decisions to participate or not to participate in extracurricular physical activities?", "What influences these decisions and how?" and "What consequences result from this decision making process?".

Synopsis

Chapter II reviews and critiques current literature relevant to girls' physical activity decisions. Chapter III describes how the grounded theory method was used in this study to explore and describe the process through which junior high girls make decisions to participate or not to participate in free time physical activity. Chapter IV describes the process by which a junior high girl makes the decision to participate or not to participate in a specific physical activity in her free time. Chapter V integrates the results of the present study with current literature relevant to girls' physical activity decision making. Finally, Chapter VI contains a discussion of the limitations of the present study and suggestions for future research; implications of the findings of the present study for programming physical activities for junior high girls; and concluding comments.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review consists of four main parts. In the first, information on girls' current physical activity levels is reviewed. In the second main section, factors contributing to girls' participation and non-participation are discussed. Third, the decision making literature relevant to girls' physical activity decisions is reviewed. Finally, directions for future research are suggested.

Physical Activity Level of Canadian Girls

Four recent surveys, the Canada Fitness Survey, the Campbell's Survey on Well-Being in Canada, Canada's Health Promotion Survey, and the Health of Canada's Youth, provide important information on Canadian girls' levels of physical activity.

The Canada Fitness Survey (1983) reported on data collected from 23,000 Canadians over the age of 6, living in households. It used a complex, stratified multi-stage cluster design. Subjects were then randomly selected from within these clusters. A telephone survey using a questionnaire and the Canadian Standardized Test of Fitness were used for data collection. This survey investigated recreation, physical fitness and health status. In this survey, less than 32% of 15-19-year-old females achieved a recommended level of aerobic fitness compared to 73% of 7-9-year-old girls. However, girls reported wanting to be more active. Seventy-nine percent of 10-11-year-old girls and 86% of 14-15-year-old girls reported that they wanted to participate more in physical activity.

The Campbell's Survey was a follow-up to the Canada Fitness Survey. Data were collected from 4000 people, most of whom responded to both surveys. In both surveys, a questionnaire (slightly modified between studies) and the Canadian Standardized Test of Fitness were used for data collection. The Campbell's Survey found that although 91% of girls aged 10-14 spent at least three hours per week, at least nine months of the year, engaged in physical recreation, less than 15% participated in regular aerobic activity for at least 30 minutes every other day (Stephens & Craig, 1990).

Canada's Health Promotion Survey investigated Canadians' health status, practices, beliefs and attitudes. Data were collected in 1985 and 1990 from Canadians aged 15 and older. In 1985, data were collected over the phone from approximately 11,181 Canadians. Of these, 827 were aged 15-19 (Siggner, 1988). In 1990, data were collected through telephone interviews with 13,000 people (Stephens & Craig, 1993). The 1985 survey found that 72% of females aged 15-19 exercised for at least 15 minutes at least three times each week (Siggner). In 1990 this figure dropped to 67% (Stephens, 1993). The intensity of these exercises was not always moderate or high. Only 45% of young women felt that they were getting enough exercise (Siggner).

In 1985, lack of time and lack of self-discipline were the reasons most commonly cited by adolescents for not exercising more. Differences in responses of young women with different activity levels were also found. Interestingly, people seemed to have friends with similar activity habits. For instance, sedentary adolescents were much more likely to report that none or only a few of their friends exercised regularly than were adolescents who exercised regularly (Siggner, 1988).

For the Health of Canada's Youth Survey, a questionnaire on health status was completed by 5,565 Canadian students aged 11, 13 and 15 (King & Coles, 1992). The percentage of girls who reported exercising at least four times a week outside of school were 52, 40 and 31 for 11-, 13-, and 15-year-olds respectively. Twenty-two percent of 11-year-olds, 30% of 13-year-olds, and 41% of 15-year-olds reported exercising once a week or less (King & Coles, 1992). Girls were less active than boys at every age. At each age girls also reported less physical activity of their best friends than boys did (King & Coles).

Overall, these health surveys documented a number of disturbing trends in Canadian girls' physical activity participation. First, at any given age during adolescence, females in Canada are less active than their male counterparts (King & Coles, 1992; Siggner, 1988; Stephens &

Craig, 1990; Stephens, 1993). Second, females in the 15-19-year-old age group report low levels of physical activity (Canada Fitness Survey, 1983; King & Coles; Stephens & Craig). Third, research indicates that there is a substantial decrease in physical activity during the junior high years (Canada Fitness Survey; King & Coles; Saskatchewan Growth Study, cited in Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation, 1988; Stephens & Craig). Finally, young women's participation in physical activity decreased between 1985 and 1990 (Stephens, 1993). On a positive note, girls reported wanting to participate more in physical activity (Canada Fitness Survey; Siggner). These physical activity patterns suggest that during their junior high years girls are making important decisions regarding their participation in physical activity.

Reasons for Participation and Non-Participation

This section is intended to provide a review of literature on girls' reasons for participation and non-participation in physical activity in their free time. Relevant literature in the areas of physical activity decision making, physical education, personal factors, socialization, opportunities, and the influence of significant others will be examined.

Decision Making and Physical Activity

Coakley and White (1992) interviewed 34 males and 26 females, aged 13-23 years with regard to how they made decisions about their sport participation. Data were collected in conjunction with a campaign to promote sport to young people in England. They found that young people's decisions regarding participation in sport were influenced by: concerns about their transition to adulthood, personal competence, financial constraints, significant others, and past experiences (Coakley & White).

Young people were more apt to make a decision to participate in a sport if they associated that activity with the transition to adulthood. For example, some activities were seen to "prepare them for adult roles or give them opportunities to do adult things (i.e, to be independent and autonomous)" (Coakley & White, 1992, p. 24). Conversely, if an activity was perceived as hindering the transition to adulthood or was identified as something done by children (including highly structured, adult-organized sport programs), then young people made a decision not to participate (Coakley & White). Learning certain sports and physical activities usually learned during childhood was also seen as childish. These young people believed that if one had not developed competence in these activities prior to secondary school, then it was inappropriate for those trying to become adults to return to an earlier stage to learn these skills (Coakley & White).

In addition to finding that lack of skill and lack of confidence were constraints to participation in physical activity for many young people, Coakley and White (1992) found that perceptions of competence influenced highly skilled young athletes' decisions in a different way. Highly skilled young athletes often reported reaching a point in their sport where they realized their skill improvement had plateaued and "skills would not continue to improve or skill improvement would demand more time and energy than they were willing to commit" (Coakley & White, 1992, p. 26). At this point, they had to make a decision about whether or not to continue in their sport even though they would no longer improve. Those who continued participating generally perceived their involvement as aiding in the transition to adulthood or enabling them to acquire occupational skills (e.g., coaching or teaching) (Coakley and White). This may be one example of modifying leisure in response to changes in circumstances.

In discussing their current attitudes toward sport and physical activity, many young women made reference to negative school physical education experiences including "boredom and lack of choice, feeling stupid or incompetent, and receiving negative evaluation from peers" (Coakley & White, 1992, p. 31). These experiences, which would be negative for anyone, are especially hurtful for teens who are trying desperately to fit in and be accepted (Hultsman, 1993a; Langer & Warheit, 1992; McCabe, Roberts & Morris, 1991).

Coakley and White's (1992) study of physical activity decision making is an exception in the current literature on girls' participation in physical activity where descriptive studies predominate. Generally these descriptive studies consist of self-administered survey questionnaires with forced-choice answers (i.e., Anderssen & Wold, 1992; Brown, Frankel, & Fennell, 1989; Browne, 1992; Canada Fitness Survey, 1983; Cockerill & Hardy, 1987; Dickenson, 1986; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Weiss & Frazer, 1995). These studies have examined attitudes toward physical activity and solitary factors influencing physical activity (e.g., perceived competency; enjoyment; importance of physical activity; nature of the activity; time; gender-role identity; parents' or friends' attitudes toward physical activity; parents' or friends' participation in physical activity; and encouragement to participate) (Anderssen & Wold; Brown et al; Browne; Cockerill & Hardy; Dickenson; Lewko & Greendorfer, 1988).

Physical Education

Information on girls' attitudes toward physical activity can be gained by examining studies on girls' attitudes toward physical education classes. Browne (1992) used a questionnaire with Likert scale responses to assess the importance of 27 possible reasons for taking or not taking physical education class. Her sample was 103 girls taking physical education classes and 103 girls not taking physical education classes at secondary schools in Western Australia.

Browne (1992) found that the most frequent reasons for participation in physical education included: liking physical education, sports and learning new skills; fun; getting a break from the classroom; and being good at the activities offered in physical education class. Girls' reasons for non-participation were: other classes were more important; no time; did not like physical activity; got enough exercise outside of school; and perceived lack of ability and skill. Girls also did not participate because they felt physical education had too much competitive activity, was too difficult, and was boring (Browne).

Cockerill and Hardy (1987) utilized a questionnaire to study the attitudes of fourth year British school girls toward certain activities in physical education. Three hundred and fifteen girls responded to a questionnaire which asked which physical education activities they particularly enjoyed, which ones they particularly disliked and why. They found that girls enjoyed activities that were easily mastered and did not require a great deal of skill to participate; activities where the intensity was self-regulated; activities that they felt competent in; and those with a high level of activity. Girls also preferred activities that improved health and fitness and those that were newer (Cockerill & Hardy). Girls disliked activities in which they felt they lacked ability and in which they felt they were not making progress. They also disliked activities that were too complicated, too physically demanding, slow, and boring (Cockerill & Hardy).

Results also indicated that the girls' had diverse attitudes toward specific physical activities. However, some activities were more neutral than others. For instance, the percentage of students who particularly disliked badminton, swimming, tennis and volleyball was always less than 3.5%. However, 37% of girls especially disliked field hockey, 15% especially disliked athletics and 14% particularly disliked gymnastics. Field hockey was disliked because of its physical aggression and contact. Athletics and gymnastics were disliked because students felt they lacked ability and were not making progress (Cockerill & Hardy, 1987).

Dickenson (1986) studied adolescents' activity patterns and attitudes toward physical education and physical activity. His subjects were 500 11-16-year-old boys and girls in six schools in Britain. For one school week, each subject filled out a questionnaire on his or her physical activity level each day. One hundred of these students were then interviewed about their attitudes toward physical activity. Children reported that physical education was important for: fitness, health, jobs in sport, and learning about sport. They said that physical education was enjoyable because it was a break, it was fun, and they liked the activities and being with their friends (Dickenson).

Personal Factors

Girl's participation depends on a number of personal factors including enjoyment and perceptions of competency. Weiss and Frazer (1995) investigated participation motive, self-perceptions, enjoyment and player status throughout a season in 141 female basketball players aged 13-15 years in Oregon. Questionnaires with Likert scales were used. Players were categorized as starters, primary substitutes and secondary substitutes according to how much they played. "All three groups cited mastery (e.g., improve and learn skills, compete), team atmosphere (team spirit, like being on a team), fitness (be physically fit, get in shape), and fun (have fun, like challenges) items in their top 10 reasons for participating" (Weiss & Frazer, p. 319). Also, girls who played more perceived themselves as having greater success, greater basketball competence, greater acceptance from their teammates, and higher levels of enjoyment (Weiss & Frazer).

Enjoyment

Young women involved in sport and physical activity rated enjoyment as a major reason for their participation (Canada Fitness Survey, 1983; Weiss, 1989). They enjoyed the activities themselves, meeting people, being with friends, and learning new skills (Browne, 1992; Dickenson, 1986; Rowland, 1990; Weiss and Fraser, 1995).

Perceptions of Competency

In the literature, perceived competence was a major distinguishing factor between those who participated in sport and physical activity and those who did not. Girls involved in sport rated themselves as skilled in physical activity and believed they could perform successfully (Welk, Corbin, & Lewis, 1995). Conversely, girls often cited lack of sufficient skills as a reason for not participating (Browne, 1992; Cockerill & Hardy, 1987; Sopinka, 1984; Zacour & Campbell, 1985-86, cited in Dahlgren, 1988). This perceived incompetence was a common reason for not participating in sport and physical activity (Browne; Cockerill & Hardy; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Fox, 1988; Raithel, 1988; Rowland, 1990; Welk et al.).

One major study of the factors influencing activity choice in young women was conducted by Eccles and Harold (1991). They collected data from 3,000 students in grades 6 and 7 in 12 school districts in the United States and from the students' parents and teachers. Questionnaires with Likert scales were used to investigate self-perceptions and activity perceptions of students for math, English and physical activity. The questionnaire contained items on self-concept of ability, perceived task value and involvement. In addition, the influence of parents and teachers on socialization was investigated. Eccles and

Harold found that girls' beliefs in their physical abilities and their assessments of whether or not they could meet the challenges of certain tasks were major determinants of attempting the activity (Eccles and Harold, 1991). Other results of this study are included later in this chapter.

Welk et al. (1995) studied high school athletes' perceptions of sport competence, physical conditioning, body attractiveness and strength. The Children's Physical Self-Perception Profile (C-PSPP) was administered to 272 males and 270 females aged 13-18 years. Eighty-seven percent of these athletes were under 17. They found that both male and female athletes had higher physical self-perceptions compared to non-athletic youth, especially with regard to skill and conditioning (Welk et al.). The researchers suggested that these athletes' perceptions of competence may have strongly influenced their decisions to participate in sports (Welk et al.).

Motor skill development is important because without basic motor skills, young women do not have the option of becoming involved in sporting activities (Lirgg, 1992; Raithel, 1988). Seefeldt suggested that once children know how to move they will become involved in games, dance and sport. He argued that fitness is a by-product of motor proficiency (quoted in Raithel, 1988). Lack of motor skill development may lead to lack of confidence in performing physical activities and hence to avoidance of physical activity. Haywood asserted that "when individuals expect failure at motor skills, this expectation becomes a limitation to their skill performance" (1993, p. 304). If children perceive their physical abilities to be low, they will avoid situations which require physical skill (Fox, 1988). Enjoyment and perceptions of competency are vital to young women's personal choices in using opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity.

Socialization

"Sport participation (and nonparticipation) is the result of decisions negotiated within the context of a young person's social environment and mediated by the person's view of self and personal goals" (Coakley & White, 1992, p. 34). Socialization is "...the process whereby individuals learn the skills, values, norms and behaviors enabling them to function competently in many different social roles within their group or culture" (Weiss & Glenn, 1992). Significant others, family members, coaches, teachers, schools and role models influence the socialization of young women into sport and physical activity. Cultural values and socialization affect the perceptions of young women and those around them. These contexts influence the extent to which young women are encouraged to participate and limit acceptable choices (Butcher, 1983; Dahlgren, 1988; Sopinka, 1984). The impact of socialization and cultural values is manifest in the influence of gender role expectations, opportunities, and the attitudes of significant others toward girls' participation in physical activity.

Gender Role Expectations

The influence of gender roles on girls' physical activity is a matter of debate in the current literature. Findings and interpretations differ. Some researchers suggest that young women's involvement in sport and physical activity is influenced by the traditional classification of aggressiveness, competitiveness, strength, and physical proficiency as masculine traits (Eccles & Harold, 1991). They suggest that because of this classification, female athletes experience conflicts with gender role identity (Brown et al., 1989; Raithel, 1988) and disparity in the acceptability and importance of sport and physical activity involvement for boys and girls (Anderssen & Wold, 1992; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Geadelmann, 1979, cited in Geadelmann, 1981; Sopinka, 1984). They further submit that these gender role expectations and social norms play an important role in young women's decisions regarding participation in physical activity (Coakley & White, 1992).

For instance, when Archer and McDonald (1990) asked 43 girls aged 9-15 from schools near Preston, Lancashire about girls' sports activities, tradition (perceived as "typical girls' sports" or sports which were less physical in nature) was one reason cited as to why girls played and were expected to play certain sports. Another example in support of the view that gender role expectations and social norms play an important role in young women's decisions regarding participation was found in Coakley and White's study. Young women often determined that sport and physical activity were irrelevant to becoming a woman and thus they decided not to participate (Coakley & White). Similarly, Eccles and Harold (1991) found that girls assessed sport to be less useful and less meaningful than boys and Browne (1992) found that one of the main reasons young women chose not to take physical education classes was because they thought other courses were more important. Researchers also suggested that these gender role expectations and social norms were responsible for research findings of low status for female athletes (Chase & Dummer, 1992; Reimer & Feltz, 1995) and low desire among girls for athletic achievement (Reimer & Feltz). These studies are described in detail in the "Status of Athletes" section (p. 27).

Conversely, other researchers have found that female athletes do not experience gender role conflicts (Allison, 1991; Jackson & Marsh, 1986). Allison documented five studies between 1979 and 1991 (Anthrop & Allison, 1983; Allison & Butler, 1984; Desertrain & Weiss, 1988; Jackson & Marsh, 1986; Sage & Loudermilk, 1979) in which female athletes reported perceiving and experiencing low role conflict. Allison suggested that:

> ... scientists/scholars have failed to distinguish, both conceptually and empirically, between what society thinks of the female athlete and what she thinks of herself (Allison & Butler, 1984). ... But the existence of stereotypes is distinct and separate from the issue of whether or not the female athlete internalizes those images and messages as part of her psychosocial identity (1991, p. 57).

Finally, Anthrop and Allison (1984, cited in Allison, 1991) proposed that "... since the female athlete has been shown repeatedly to have a very positive sense of self (Balaz, 1975; Duquin, 1978; Snyder & Kivlin, 1975; Snyder & Spreitzer, 1976) role conflict was simply not the problem that some scholars had indicated ..." (Allison, 1991, p. 53).

Research by Delaney and Lee (1995) supports Allison's view. Delaney and Lee studied the relationship between self-esteem, sex roles and physical activity in 72 male and 91 female students, aged 14-17 years, in Australia. Students completed the Australian Sex Role Inventory (ASRI), which is a Likert scale questionnaire, and the Schools Short Form of the Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory (SEI), in which students respond by agreeing or disagreeing with self-statements. They also answered questions regarding competitive and non-competitive sports and physical activity participation. Responses of high-active students (those who exercised at least three times per week) and low-active students (those who exercised less than three times per week) were then compared.

Delaney and Lee (1995) found that high-active boys and girls had higher self-esteem and higher scores on the positive scales of the ASRI than low-active boys and girls. This finding contradicts predictions that high-active girls would have low self-esteem because of the social inappropriateness of physical activity for girls. The high-active girls scored the highest on both of the femininity subscales. "This might suggest that their involvement in physical activity can enhance, rather than detract from, their perceptions of themselves as feminine " (Delaney & Lee, p. 86). This may be due in part to the high prevalence of participation in traditionally feminine activities. For instance, girls' main physical activities were aerobics and dance, and the competitive sport in which the most girls participated was netball. While issues regarding the influence of gender role expectations remain unresolved, gender differences are apparent in motives, ability and importance of physical activity, and status of athletes.

Motives

Gill (1988) investigated differences in competitive orientation and sport participation between boys and girls in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12. The students completed four questionnaires: the Sport Orientation Questionnaire, the Work and Family Orientation Questionnaire, Martens' Sport Competition Anxiety Test (SCAT), and the Sports Competition Trait Inventory. They also responded to yes-no questions regarding their sport involvement, participation in organized activities other than sport, if they planned to attend college, and if they liked working with computers.

Gill (1988) found that girls' SCAT scores were significantly higher than the boys'. Girls also scored significantly lower than boys on all three measures of competitiveness and on win orientation. However, boys' and girls' scores on other measures of general achievement orientation were alike. Also, girls were at least as high as boys on goal orientation "... which reflects a noncompetitive achievement orientation towards personal standards within sport" (Gill, p. 156). Gill concluded "thus, females may well be highly achievement oriented toward sport, even competitive sport, but they seem to focus more on personal goals and standards whereas males focus more on interpersonal comparison and winning" (p. 156). Females also reported less participation than males in competitive, but not in non-competitive sport activities.

Ryckman and Hamel (1995) studied adolescents' motivation and participation in organized team sports. Seventy male and 84 female ninth grade students from Maine completed: a sports involvement questionnaire; measures of motives of affiliation, competitiveness and achievement; and a social desirability scale. Personal development competitiveness was the main predictor of sports participation for girls. Personal development competitiveness "... refers to an attitude in which the major focus is not on winning, but rather in using the competitive experience to facilitate personal growth" (Ryckman & Hamel, p. 387). They also found that girls wanted to grow personally and socially.

Ability and Importance of Physical Activity

Eccles and Harold (1991) and Sopinka (1984) found that boys rated themselves as having greater sport ability than girls. Research by Eccles and Harold suggested that adolescents are aware of and respond to societal gender role expectations. They concluded that:

> ... gender differences on the self-perception, task value and participation indicators are much larger than gender differences on attitudinal variables. This fact suggests that social experience variables, independently, or in interaction with earlier attitudinal differences, contribute substantially to the gender differences observed in participation rates (Eccles & Harold, p. 29-30).

Eccles and Harold (1991) also found that gender differences in evaluations of sport were significantly greater than those in English and math. Girls reported that they felt less competent in sport than in academics. In addition, boys assessed sport to be more useful, more meaningful, and more fun than girls assessed it to be. These differences are significant because, like adults, children are inclined to spend their time and energy on activities they identify as more important and enjoyable, and in activities in which they feel competent (Fox, 1991; Weiss, 1989).

Young men and women differed not only in their own assessments of the importance of sport, but also in their assessments of the importance of their participation and success in sport to their parents. Boys perceived their ability in sport to be more important to their parents than did girls. Boys also believed their development of physical competence was more important to their parents than girls did. Boys who rated importance to their parents higher also assessed themselves as having greater ability. In addition, boys perceived their parents to be more active than did girls (Eccles & Harold, 1991).

Given the societal expectations for males and females, it would be interesting to examine whether these differences are a response to societal expectations. It is conceivable that regardless of their own personal feelings about the importance of physical fitness and sport performance, some parents might encourage their sons to participate in sport and physical activity and discourage their daughters from participation simply because they want them to "fit in". These perceptions of physical activity as unimportant for girls are a concern because regular physical activity is important for the health of these young women.

Status of Athletes

The influence of athletic participation in adolescents' lives is largely determined by gender. Because some people feel that athletics, physical challenge, and competition are masculine, female athletes do not receive the respect from their peers that male athletes do. While male athletes are usually popular in their schools and communities, female athletes often feel pressured because they do not belong to the "main stream" at a time when conformity to the group and peer approval is important.

Research by Chase and Dummer (1992) illustrated children's identification with culturally determined gender roles. Two hundred and fifty-one girls and 227 boys in grades four, five and six completed a questionnaire and ranked the importance of four variables in determining personal, male, and female popularity. The four variables were academic achievement, sports ability, appearance, and money. Boys rated "being good at sports" as most important for their own and other boys' popularity and this importance increased with age. When asked to choose the most important determinant of their own popularity, 44 to 68% of boys and only 14-16% of girls chose sports ability. Peer-ranked importance of sport for the popularity of girls decreased as grade increased. Girls rated their appearance as the most important determinant of their own popularity. As well, peers consistently rated the appearance of girls as most important.

Reimer and Feltz (1995) conducted a similar study with high school juniors and seniors. Ninety females and 81 males were given a questionnaire which "... asked how they wanted to be remembered after high school graduation and answered from a choice of four categories: brilliant student, leader in activities, star athlete, or most popular" (p. 4). The girls wanted most to be remembered as brilliant students and the boys wanted most to be remembered as star athletes. The biggest differences between the sexes were in response to leader in activities, the second most popular choice for girls and least desired by boys, and star athlete, the choice of the most boys and the least girls. From this the researchers concluded that "...perceived social status of the female athlete has not changed in the past decade, and although more females may be participating in sports, their perception of sport as a status indicator has not increased" (Reimer & Feltz, 1995, p. 8).

Although these results support the view that sports are a more important source of status for boys than girls, it may be that the wording of the choices affected the difference in males' and females' responses. It has been documented (McCabe et al., 1991) that girls desire public recognition less than boys. In this case, recognition is part of being a "star". Perhaps differences in responses would have been less dramatic if the choices had been academic achievement and athletic achievement.

As part of the same study, the effect of stereotyped pictures was investigated. "The study employed a 2x2x3 (Sex x Sport x Image) between subjects design" (Reimer & Feltz, 1995, p. 4). Boys and girls were randomly assigned to sport (gender appropriate or gender inappropriate) and visual image (feminine or androgenous or no picture) conditions. Subjects read a scenario which told them of a young woman who played on either the school's tennis (considered gender appropriate) or basketball (considered gender inappropriate) team. Subjects were then asked if they would like to be friends with her. Male subjects were also asked if they would like to go out with the girl. Responses were ratings using a Likert-type scale ranging from definitely not to definitely yes. The experimental group was also shown a picture of an androgenous young woman or a feminine young woman.

Reimer and Feltz (1995) found that the boys' rating of the feminine image was higher than their ratings for the androgenous image or no image and higher than any of the females' ratings. The images were not rated differently by the females. All females' ratings were higher than the males' rating of the androgenous picture. They reported that boys were more likely to want a female tennis player than a female basketball player for a friend or girlfriend. Girls, however, rated the basketball player higher than the boys and in fact higher than they rated the tennis player as a potential friend. The researchers suggested that females may have responded in this way because they did not identify the basketball player as androgenous and the tennis player as feminine.

There are a number of other possible explanations for these results. First, basketball is a team sport and tennis is an individual sport. Perhaps the girls thought the team member might be more friendly and the tennis player more non-relational. Second, although they were school teams, tennis and basketball might bring to mind quite different social statuses. Third, it would be interesting to know if the males would have responded in the same way to the picture regardless of what the scenario said. For instance, would the results have been different if both scenarios had simply said the girl was friendly rather than that she was involved in a sport? Finally, males actually rated the feminine basketball player higher as a friend than the tennis player. While this likely was not statistically significant, it does indicate that males did not *only* prefer tennis players over basketball players in *all* conditions.

Types of Opportunities

Girls' Preferences

Boys and girls require different varieties and types of sport and physical activity opportunities to meet their different needs and interests. In general, young women express a preference for individual activities over games. They like activities where the intensity is self-regulated and where they are not compared to others. While boys enjoy visibility in sport, girls prefer private, solitary activities (McCabe et al., 1991). This likely results partially from self-consciousness about the appearance of their developing bodies (McCabe et al.) and about their perceived lack of skill. Studies have found that unlike boys, girls also preferred more cooperative, less competitive activities (Brown et al., 1989; Canada Fitness Survey, 1983; Cockerill & Hardy, 1987; Dickenson, 1986; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Gill, 1988; McCabe et al., 1991; Raithel, 1988; Ryckman & Hamel, 1995).

One major resource in the area of variety and types of sport and physical activity opportunities available to young women is Dahlgren's (1988) report. The information in this report was compiled by a task force established in response to concern by Fitness Canada that "...opportunities for, and participation in physical activity by young females were not at an acceptable level" (Dahlgren, p. 1).

Studies by Browne (1992) and Dickenson (1986), discussed in the "Physical Education" section (p. 13) provided information about the unique needs and interests of girls. Dickenson also found that two-thirds of girls preferred individual activities to games while boys preferred each almost equally. Games included both contact and non-contact games. Individual activities included fitness and water activities.

Gill (1988), in a study described in the "Motives" section (p. 23), also found that boys were more involved than girls in competitive sports and that boys' and girls' rates of participation in noncompetitive physical activities were equal. These gender differences need to be considered in the provision of physical education and community sports and recreation programs. However, this is not always the case.

Activities Offered

In North American society, cultural values influence the available opportunities for participation in sport and physical activity for young women. Cultural values affect both the perception of the importance of physical activity for girls and the appropriateness of participation in particular sports and physical activities. The values of the girls themselves, the adults who influence them, and their peers all have an impact on girls' participation.

School and community programs often offer "male" sports. Researchers have suggested that programs originally designed for boys, which are then altered to include girls but without consideration of any changes necessary to meet the needs or interests of girls, do not truly provide equal opportunity or access to sport and physical activity (Geadelmann, 1981; Miller, 1982; Oldenhove, 1989; Zinnecker, 1979 cited in Pfister, 1993). In addition, there is a lack of opportunities to participate in non-competitive or individual activities both in the community and in schools (Butcher, 1983; Ministry of Tourism and Recreation, ON, 1984, cited in Dahlgren, 1988). Both non-competitive and individual activities are preferred more by girls than boys (Brown et al., 1989; Canada Fitness Survey, 1983; Cockerill & Hardy, 1987; Dickenson, 1986; Eccles & Harold, 1991; McCabe et al., 1991; Raithel, 1988). Thus, females are more affected by the unavailability of these opportunities.

Sopinka (1984) suggested that boys are given priority in terms of funding and facilities and delegates to the International Conference Women, Sport and the Challenge of Change assessed the domination of interest, support, and resources of governments, media, and communities by male team sports to be a major barrier to women's participation in sport and physical activity (Kluka, 1994). However, neither provided any research to support their claims. In addition, Dahlgren stated that "many of those involved in the administration, programme planning, and programme provision of physical activities for girls are guilty of sex stereotyping" (1988, p. 26). However, she also provided no evidence to support this statement. In fact, as mentioned earlier, it seems that in an attempt not to promote sex stereotypes, program planners have sometimes eliminated all differences in programs and failed to consider the different needs and interests of boys and girls (Geadelmann, 1981; Miller, 1982; Oldenhove, 1989).

Garcia, Broda, Frenn, Coviak, Pender and Ronis (1995) investigated differences in exercise beliefs and behaviors between boys and girls in grades 5/6 and 8. Two hundred and eighty six American students completed questionnaires on exercise beliefs. Eight to 10 weeks later, they recorded their activity for 7 days using the Child/Adolescent Exercise Log. Compared to boys, girls exercised less (currently and previously), had lower self-esteem, had lower perceived health status, and saw themselves as less athletic (Garcia et al).

Garcia et al. (1995) found no gender differences in access to exercise facilities and programs but they did not assess if these opportunities were equally attractive to boys and girls. Garcia et al. also found that "...adolescent girls were *less likely* than their pre-adolescent counterparts to believe that the benefits of exercise outweighed the barrier to exercise" (1995, p. 217) and that "the exploratory results suggest that the effects of developmental stage (grade), perceived health status, exercise self-efficacy, social support for exercise, and exercise norms on the behavioral outcome of exercise may be mediated by beliefs about benefits and barriers" (p. 217).

The variety and types of opportunities for participation in sport and physical activity available to young women in the community are also affected by the attitudes of community members toward the importance and appropriateness of young women's involvement in sport and physical activity.

Influence of Significant Others

Much research has highlighted the importance of significant others' approval or acceptance on adolescents' decision making (Coakley & White, 1992; Godin, 1993; Grimes & Swisher, 1989, cited in Pfeffer, 1993; Hultsman, 1993a; Langer & Warheit, 1992; Maddux, 1993; Schvaneveldt & Adams, 1983). These significant others include peers, friends, siblings, parents, and to some extent leaders. The influence of one's reference group is particularly important during adolescence when joining, belonging and peer-pressure are important (Hultsman). In fact, Langer & Warheit suggested that "adolescents are motivated to behave so as to avoid or reduce rejection..." (p. 923, citing Zetterberg, 1957, Pepitone, 1964, Webster & Sobieszek, 1974, and Kaplan, 1975).

Significant others affect young women's opportunities for participation in sport and physical activity in three ways. First, they directly influence the availability of opportunities for young women through exposure, encouragement, and support. Second, their assessment of the importance and appropriateness of physical activity for young women determines the types of opportunities that are offered to girls. Finally, attitudes, values, and behaviours of significant others are important mediators of one's expectations for achievement and thus of behavior choice (Eccles (Parsons) et al., 1983, cited in Eccles and Harold, 1991).

Expectations

One factor influencing young women's physical activity opportunities in school are the expectations of parents, teachers, coaches and administrators. Expectations determine the extent to which young women are encouraged to participate in physical activity and also the degree of competence required (Dahlgren, 1988; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Oldenhove, 1989; Sopinka, 1984). Despite Oldenhove's assertion that "using separate norms for boys and girls prior to puberty does little to encourage a greater push toward equality, as they often reinforce differing standards and an acceptance of poorer performances by girls" (1989, p. 177), research suggests that different standards are the norm. Geadelmann found that students believed teachers had lower expectations for girls than for boys (1979, cited in Geadelmann, 1981). Sopinka stated that "girls frequently encounter diminished performance and intensity expectations in school athletics" (p. 62). In addition, Eccles and Harold found no gender differences in how teachers evaluated children's abilities and aptitudes in math and English but gender differences were apparent in evaluations of athletic ability and aptitude.

Coakley and White (1992) found that significant others influenced young people's decisions to participate in sports or physical activities in two ways. First, young women reported that parents and boyfriends often acted as constraints to leisure participation. Parents were protective of their daughters and thus the young women were restricted in where, when and with whom they could participate. Young men, however, did not report any consideration of parental expectations or restrictions when they planned (or spontaneously participated in) sports or recreational activities. Parents also had expectations that their daughters would not allow leisure to interfere with daughters' family responsibilities such as cooking and cleaning (Coakley & White). Similarly, young women often reported giving up their own sport and leisure interests when they got involved with a boyfriend. Young men, on the other hand, reported consciously protecting their own leisure time and interests. All young people seemed to just accept these differences and take them for granted (Coakley & White).

The second way in which significant others influenced decisions to initiate or continue sport and physical activity participation was through support and encouragement (Coakley & White, 1992). Parents were the most important source of encouragement and support for those aged 13-16 years. Parents often also supplied the money and transportation necessary for their children to participate. For those over 16, "adults who served as advocates or models" (Coakley & White, p. 30) were the most significant influence on decisions regarding participation. Same-sex friends were also important influences in decisions regarding initiation or continuation in sport or physical activity. This social support was especially important among females (Coakley & White). Many other researchers have documented the importance of social support for young women's participation in physical activity (Anderssen & Wold, 1992; Brown et al., 1989; Browne, 1992; Lewko & Greendorfer, 1988).

One implication of these low expectations for female involvement in physical activity is that girls' opportunities for participation are diminished by the lack of importance placed on physical activity and skill. This low value placed on the importance of physical activity and skill for young women lends support to the accuracy of young women's appraisal of other courses and skills (such as math, English, and household chores) as being more valued in society (Eccles & Harold, 1991).

Availability of Opportunities

Significant others, through their attributions, interpretations and explanations, influence the way children learn to interpret their own experiences. As well, significant others determine the availability of opportunities for children. In this way they "screen" children's experiences and thus affect which activities children will experience and have the potential to develop competency in. This "screening" also influences which activities children learn to identify as appropriate for themselves to participate in (Eccles & Harold, 1991).

Influence on Participation

During adolescence, young women are especially sensitive to the opinions of others concerning the appropriateness of certain activities (McCabe et al., 1991). Thus, Lewko and Greendorfer (1988) asserted that for young women to become active participants in sport and physical activity, they need a number of significant others to act as sources of support. However, parents and peers may not encourage and support girls' participation in sports and physical activity the way they do boys' participation (cf. Anderssen & Wold, 1992; Brown et al., 1989; Dahlgren, 1988; Dempsey, Kimiecik, & Horn, 1993; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Haywood, 1993; King & Coles, 1992; Lewko & Greendorfer; McCabe et al; Oldenhove, 1989).

Brustad (1993, cited in Williams & Gill, 1995) found that parents' encouragement toward physical activity mediated children's perceptions of competence. Brown et al. (1989) examined the influence of significant others on participation in sport and physical activity by young women. They studied participation in intramurals, interschool athletics and community sport. Their sample consisted of 376 girls aged 13-19 from a Canadian city. The researchers used a Likert scale questionnaire to investigate girls' perceptions. They examined girls' perceptions of significant others' encouragement to participate in physical activity, support for involvement in sport compared with other activities, and evaluations of the appropriateness of sport for girls. Brown et al. also collected data on parents' physical activity levels and how support and encouragement changed as girls got older. They found moderate positive correlations (ranging from .13 to .34) between each influence of parents and peers and girls' participation in intramurals, interschool sports and community sports.

Anderssen and Wold (1992) studied the impact of parental and peer activity levels and support for physical activity on the leisure-time physical activity levels of adolescents using a questionnaire with multiple choice responses. They found that parental and peer activity levels and parental and peer support for physical activity all had an equal positive influence on adolescents' leisure-time physical activity levels. They also noted that in comparison to boys, girls reported lower activity levels of best friends, less direct support for fitness-related exercise from fathers, and less direct support for exercising vigorously from parents. Anderssen and Wold found that direct help in exercising vigorously and best friend's physical activity level were the greatest influences on girls' physical activity.

Anderssen and Wold's (1992) conclusions were congruent with those of other researchers. McCabe et al. (1991) reported that young women whose parents, especially mothers, were successful in sports were more likely to participate in physical activity than those who had inactive parents. Lewko and Greendorfer (1988) concluded that family and peers were more influential than schools on adolescents' sport and physical activity participation. Haywood (1993) reported that peer groups had a significant influence on participation in physical activity programs. If physical activity is not acceptable within an individual's peer group, the child will not be inclined to join. In addition, the peer group may dictate which activities are appropriate. These findings highlight the importance of support. Often an opportunity may exist but will not be used by young women without the support of significant others.

Researchers have observed that some influences become more important as young women progress to higher levels of competition. Lewko and Greendorfer (1988) found that athletes involved at higher levels of competition were more apt to cite parents and teachers or coaches as significant influences. This makes sense intuitively because as athletes become more dedicated, so must those around them. Parents are often depended upon for financial and emotional support and sometimes for chauffeur services. Coaches and teachers of competitive teams need to spend more time with their athletes and provide them with more attention than is expected from coaches of recreational teams or physical education teachers. The importance of the influence of same-sex friends also seems to increase as the level of involvement increases (McCabe et al., 1991). This may be, as suggested previously, because female athletes are not especially popular within the general population of their schools and they turn to teammates and other female athletes for friendship and support.

Brown et al. (1989) offered a good summary of what is known about the influence of significant others on young women's involvement in sport and physical activity.

> Those who received more encouragement and relative support for their involvement, who perceived that their significant others viewed sport as an appropriate form of social participation for adolescent females, and who reported increasing support for their participation as they grew older had stronger patterns of continuity than their counterparts who received less positive influences ... (Browne et al., p. 407).

Support for Physical Activity

Research findings differ in the area of significant others' support for physical activity in girls versus boys. As discussed in the gender roles section, some suggest that in accordance with traditional gender roles, cultural values dictate that it is more important for males to develop skill in and excel in activities which are seen as embodying masculine qualities (e.g., strength and physical proficiency) (Anderssen & Wold, 1992; Eccles & Harold, 1991). In support of this position, some studies found that North American families encourage and support boys' participation in sport and physical activity more than girls' participation (Anderssen & Wold; Eccles & Harold).

Contradictory findings were obtained in a study of young tennis players. Leff and Hoyle (1995) studied perceptions of parental pressure and support in 97 male and 57 female tennis players in the United States. The subjects ranged in age from 6 to 18 years. Questionnaires measuring parental pressure and support, enjoyment of tennis, priority of tennis, tennis burnout, and self-esteem were used. The girls reported significantly more support from both mothers and fathers than the boys did. Daughters also experienced similar degrees of support and pressure from mothers as from fathers. They found that "...support from both mother and father are related to enjoyment of tennis, tennis self-esteem, and global self esteem for both males and females" (Leff & Hoyle, p. 200).

Girls perceived parental support as positive and parental pressure as negative. Boys did not perceive parental support and parental pressure as opposites (Leff & Hoyle, 1995). The researchers suggested that this difference might have been due to boys having higher levels of perceived competence in sport and receiving more support from sources other than their families. Leff and Hoyle also suggested that if girls have lower levels of perceived competence and receive less support from outside sources, they may require more direct encouragement from their parents (Leff & Hoyle). Treiber, Baranowski, Braden, Strong, Levy et al., (1991, cited in Garcia et al., 1995) also found that compared to boys, girls needed more support from their families for physical activity involvement. Garcia et al. found no gender differences in social support for exercise or exercise norms.

Although findings on the relative support for physical activity received by males and females are inconsistent, all researchers agree that support from parents and peers is essential for girls' participation in physical activity.

Decision Making

The purpose of this section is to review the literature on adolescents' decision making with a focus on how this applies to junior high girls' decision making regarding participation or non-participation in free time physical activity. Although there is very little research specifically addressing how junior high girls make decisions regarding participation or non-participation in extracurricular physical activities, the literature contains information on various aspects of this situation including: models of decision making, decision making in adolescence, and leisure decision making. Each of these areas will be examined.

Decision making is the process of choosing among alternative courses of action (Janis & Mann, 1977; Restle, 1961).

Models of Decision Making

Models of judgement (e.g., social judgement theory, information integration theory, and attribution theory) portray the cognitive processes that may underlie decision making behavior rather than describing the behavior (Abelson & Levi, 1985). In contrast, process tracing methods "have been used to determine what information individuals seek to acquire before making a choice, how this information is structured to form a cognitive representation of the problem, and how the representation is processed in order to make a choice" (Abelson & Levi, p. 256). Two process tracing methods, observing eye movements and examining explicit information searches, investigate information acquisition. A third process tracing method, verbal report as the subject performs a decision task, provides data on both information acquisition and processing (Abelson & Levi). Because the other methods do not provide information on decisions as complex as participation, only verbal and other self-report methods will be discussed here. As Coakley & White (1992) asserted, "when the focus is on decision-making rather than sport participation/ nonparticipation, it is clear that there must be a concern with process, context, and human agency" (p. 34). Thus, only choice models which include these three aspects will be reviewed in detail.

There are a variety of models of adolescent decision making in the literature. The Pre-Adult Health Decision-Making Model [PAHDM] and the Tiedeman model are proposed models of the process of adolescent decision making. The Pre-Adult Health Decision-Making Model assumes that "...human behavior is learned, rational, modifiable, and dynamic. It also assumes that human behavior involves cognitive, emotional, and symbolic processes, which continually interact...." (Langer & Warheit, 1992, p. 933). The PAHDM was constructed from a theoretical perspective to include both the identity development of the adolescent and the social aspects of decision making. It has not been empirically tested.

The Tiedeman model describes the seven steps one goes through in making a decision. Schvaneveldt and Adams (1983) proposed that this was a good model for general decision making in adolescence. However, much other research suggests that humans generally do not make decisions in the objective, rational way that this model portrays (Plous, 1993; Schvaneveldt & Adams). Also, there has been little empirical testing of this model and then only with regard to career choice.

The Health Belief Model may appear applicable to adolescents' decision making regarding physical activity. However, it will not be discussed in detail for two reasons. First, "research findings have indicated that the health belief model is `... only moderately accurate in predicting preventive health outcomes' (Janz & Becker, 1984; Becker et al., 1977)" (Langer & Warheit, 1992, p. 928). Second, it requires that one believe s/he is personally threatened by a specific health risk (Langer & Warheit) and it is not evident that girls perceive physical inactivity in this way (Canada Fitness Survey, 1983; Harren, 1976, cited in Schvaneveldt & Adams, 1983; Langer & Warheit; Simon, 1976, cited in Schvaneveldt & Adams).

Dishman & Dunn (1988) reviewed health behaviour models and their implications for children. They found that only Sonstrom's (1978) Physical Activity Model was designed for youth physical activity patterns and even it had not been tested experimentally. It was not known how the Theory of Reasoned Action, Self-Efficacy Model, Health Locus of Control, Perceived Competence, Personal Investment, and Subjective Expected Utility related to adolescents. This research remains to be done. There is much still to be learned about the factors influencing young women's decisions regarding participation in sport and physical activity.

Decision Making in Adolescence

The influence of development and gender on adolescents' decision making are addressed.

Development

Baron, Granato, Spranca, and Teubal (1993) conducted three studies examining biases in children's decision making. In total, 209 American boys and girls aged 5-15 years were tested. Questionnaires and interviews were used. Baron et al. found that, when making decisions, children often did not consider setting a precedent for future decisions, the probability of desired or undesired outcomes, and the frequency of similar cases. These weaknesses were still apparent in early adolescence and limited adolescents' decision making capabilities (Baron et al). They also found evidence of a strong myside-bias, in which "arguments were erroneously classified as supporting the subject's favored option" (Baron et al., p. 22). As well, children judged arguments to be better when the arguments supported their opinion (Baron et al).

Davidson (1991) studied children's searching of predecisional information using an information board procedure. Two studies were conducted. In the first, subjects were 30 second graders, 30 fifth graders, and 30 eighth graders in New York. In the second study, subjects were 42 second graders and 42 fifth graders in Kentucky. Davidson found that children justified their decision by stating positive aspects of the option they chose. This is similar to the way in which adult are more apt to seek and attend to information which reinforces their positions rather than disconfirming information (Plous, 1993).

Decision making abilities improve dramatically in early and mid-adolescence (Keating, 1990, cited in Ormond, Luszcz, Mann, & Beswick, 1991) to the point that, most 15-year-olds make decisions in a way that is similar to adults (Mann, Harmoni, and Power, 1989). Decision making ability improves as adolescents develop greater ability to consider goals; to generate and evaluate options; to predict outcomes of actions; to weigh the risks, costs and benefits of alternatives; and to assess the credibility of various sources of information (Baron et al, 1993; Grisso & Vierling, 1978, and Kaser-Boyd, Adelman & Taylor, 1985, cited in Ormond et al.; Lewis, 1981; Mann et al.). Adequate knowledge, verbal reasoning ability, internal locus of control, and more future time orientation are associated with more mature problem solving (Sandler, Watson, & Levine, 1992; Schvaneveldt & Adams, 1983). Ormond et al. also suggested that as metacognitive knowledge (knowledge about cognitive processes) improved so did decision making.

Schvaneveldt and Adams (1983) reported that adolescents most often used an intuitive or satisfaction style to make everyday decisions. In the intuitive style, "...the emphasis is on emotions, feelings, and fantasy. Information seeking and rational weighing of competing data are mostly ignored. The impending decision is based on what `feels right'" (p. 100, citing Harren, 1976). The satisfaction style of decision making means that one only considers the minimum criteria necessary to make an adequate decision (not the best but one that will do) (Simon, 1976, cited in Schvaneveldt & Adams).

Girls' and Boys' Decision Making

Research studying the similarities and differences in decision making in boys and girls have produced mixed results. In the studies described in the previous section, Baron et al. (1993) found no differences in decision making between boys and girls, and Davidson (1991) found no gender differences in searching of predecisional information. Ormond et al. (1991) also studied decision making in adolescence. Eighty-four South Australian students completed questionnaires. Results indicated that although their metacognitive knowledge and decision-making performance were the same, males had much greater confidence in their own decision making abilities while girls underestimated their abilities (Ormond et al). The researchers recommended that future research investigate this discrepancy.

Schvaneveldt and Adams (1991) suggested that male adolescents were more apt to use planning and satisfaction in their decision making strategies, while female adolescents more often used intuition and satisfaction. Other gender differences specific to choices regarding physical activity and sports participation were discussed in the "Socialization" section (p. 19).

Leisure Decision Making

Models of leisure decision making are very much relevant to decisions regarding physical activity participation because many leisure activities involve physical activity. For instance, of all the leisure activities identified by Edmonton junior and senior high school students, 73% involved physical activity. Of all the leisure activities identified, 44% were "competitive sport activities", 29% were "non-competitive physical health and exercise activities" and 27% were "other" activities (Jackson & Rucks, 1995). Consideration of physical activities as leisure activities is particularly appropriate in considering extracurricular physical activities. With the exception of some young elite athletes who may perceive sport as their profession, most adolescents voluntarily participate in physical activity outside of school and likely perceive this as a leisure decision.

Much of the recent literature on decisions regarding participation or non-participation in leisure activities has focused on negotiation of constraints to leisure participation. Models were created in response to recognition of the need to move beyond "barriers" in describing and explaining the factors that limit or constrain leisure participation. Jackson and Searle (1985) explained:

> a person's non-participation, at least in a specific activity or type of activity, cannot always be explained by the effects of one or more barriers, even though there may indeed be a "reason" for non-participation, such as lack of interest, or alternatively the preference for an entirely different kind of activity. ... This in turn suggests that "barriers to participation" should not be equated with, but rather are a subset of "reasons for not participating" (p. 697).

Current models of leisure decision making strive to reintegrate the various aspects of leisure decision making which have been studied separately in the past and to move beyond participation or non-participation to the experience of leisure and the total process involved in making decisions about this experience. Specifically, these models endeavor to portray participation, non-participation, leisure constraints, and preferences within the context of and in relationship with all of the factors which influence an individual's recreational decisions, choices, and behavior (Jackson & Searle, 1985) and to depict the complex process of decision making which results in leisure behavior (Jackson & Dunn, 1988; Jackson & Searle; Searle, Mactavish, & Brayley, 1993).

Nature of Constraints

Constraints to participation in an activity do not necessarily result in non-participation because rather than reacting passively to these challenges, many people negotiate through constraints and modify or adapt to initiate or continue their participation. This adaptation often results in participation that is somewhat different from how these people would have participated if constraints did not exist (Crawford, Jackson & Godbey, 1991; Jackson, Crawford, & Godbey, 1993)

Crawford & Godbey (1987) asserted that barriers to leisure must be considered within the context of the relationship between leisure preferences and participation. They also proposed three types of barriers which intervene in different ways in the preference-participation relationship:

> *Intrapersonal* barriers involve individual psychological states and attributes which interact with leisure preferences rather than intervening between preferences and participation. Examples of intrapersonal barriers include stress, depression, anxiety, religiosity, kin and non-kin reference group attitudes, prior socialization into specific leisure activities, perceived self-skill, and subjective evaluations of the appropriateness and availability of various leisure activities (Crawford & Godbey, p. 122).

"*Interpersonal* barriers are the result of interpersonal interaction or the relationship between individuals' characteristics. ... Barriers of this sort may interact with both preference for, and subsequent participation in, companionate leisure activities" (Crawford & Godbey, 1987, p. 123). Inability to find a leisure partner is an example of an interpersonal barrier (Crawford & Godbey).

> *Structural* barriers represent constraints as they are commonly conceptualized, as intervening factors between leisure preference and participation. Examples of structural barriers include family life-cycle stage, family financial resources, season, climate, the scheduling of work time, availability of opportunity (and knowledge of such availability), and reference group attitudes concerning the appropriateness of certain activities (Crawford & Godbey, 1987, p. 124).

Crawford et al. (1991) proposed a sequential order of constraints, from intrapersonal to interpersonal to structural, illustrating a hierarchy of importance. They suggested that intrapersonal constraints are first because they direct one's will to participate or not to participate in a particular activity. The primacy of intrapersonal constraints is supported by research indicating that an individual's beliefs regarding what s/he and others should do, one's preferences, and one's ability to execute a certain behavior may predispose a person to behave in a particular manner (Huston & Ashmore, 1986, cited in Crawford et al.). Thus, people's subjective evaluations of these three components of intrapersonal constraint may preclude them from examining the degree to which interpersonal and structural constraints to leisure participation exist (Crawford et al). However, Henderson & Bialeschki (1993) found that the relationship between leisure constraints, preferences and participation were complex and interactive and that leisure constraints were not sequential and were sometimes negotiated more than once. This study is described further in the "Nature of Constraints" (p. 53) section.

Many researchers have concluded that girls' expectations significantly influence their decisions regarding physical activity participation (Brawley & Rodgers, 1993; Coakley & White, 1992; Jackson & Rucks, 1995; McAuley & Rowney, 1990, cited in Poag-Ducharme & Brawley, 1993). Jackson et al. (1993) suggested that the expectation of encountering an interpersonal or structural constraint can act as an intrapersonal constraint. People's anticipation that they will be unable to negotiate an interpersonal or structural constraint to initiating or continuing participation may lead to suppression of their desire to participate (Jackson et al., 1993).

In fact, Wright and Goodale (1991, cited in Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993) suggested that lack of interest is not an independent constraint to leisure but rather a dependent variable related to preference. Searle & Jackson (1985, cited in Henderson & Bialeschki) proposed that lack of interest reflects resignation to perceived constraints. This proposed relationship is consistent with cognitive dissonance theory which suggests that people are motivated to resolve conflicts between their attitudes and behaviors in a way that reduces the dissonance between them (Festinger, 1957 cited in Jackson, 1993). Thus, when people believe that they will be unable to negotiate the constraints and thus unable to participate in an activity, they devalue the activity and tell themselves that they do not want to participate. This reduces the dissonance between their attitudes (not wanting to do it) and their behavior (not doing it).

Because perceptions of ability to negotiate anticipated interpersonal and structural constraints may modify one's leisure preferences, "people's knowledge of and potential to adopt various forms of constraints negotiation strategies become crucial and frequently distinct components of the process of negotiation of leisure constraints" (Jackson, 1993, p. 8). This is congruent with the theories of self-efficacy and Reasoned Action/ Planned Behavior which include one's perception of one's ability to perform a behavior (including overcoming barriers to doing so) as a predictor of behavior (Ajzen, 1988, cited in Biddle & Mutrie, 1991; Brawley & Rodgers, 1993).

Types of Constraints

Constraints have been investigated in adults (e.g., Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1993), women (e.g., Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993; Henderson, Stalnaker, & Taylor, 1988), and junior high and high school students (e.g., Hultsman, 1993a; Hultsman, 1993b; Jackson & Rucks, 1993; Jackson & Rucks, 1995). Lack of time, cost, lack of a leisure partner and health problems were constraints common to all these groups. Lack of skills, inaccessibility of facilities, and others' expectations were constraints identified by the women and adolescents (Henderson et al., Jackson & Rucks).

Jackson & Rucks (1995) explored junior high and high school students' negotiation of leisure constraints. A respondent-completed questionnaire with open-ended questions was completed by 425 Edmonton students in grades 7-12. They found that constraints to participation among adolescents could be classified into eight categories (from most frequently to least frequently reported): other commitments and lack of time; lack of skills (including inexperience, inadequate fitness and fear); interpersonal problems including having no one to participate with, lack of self-confidence, and parents' and peers' attitudes toward one's participation; problems with health and physical fitness; geographical inaccessibility and lack of transportation; lack of money; lack of facilities; and others (Jackson & Rucks).

Henderson et al. (1988) investigated barriers to recreation in adult women aged 18-66 years. Two hundred and ninety-four American women completed a questionnaire with Likert scale responses. The women identified lack of time as their greatest barrier to recreation. Lack of money, family concerns, and the inconvenience and inaccessibility of facilities were the next strongest barriers. Having no one to participate with; not knowing what opportunities were available or how to find them; inability to plan; inadequate time management; bad past experiences; boredom; and lack of interest, skills, fitness, and self-confidence were also important barriers to participation. The women reported that lack of knowledge and social inappropriateness were not significant barriers (Henderson et al.).

Despite the fact that there were vast differences in these populations (junior high and high school students in Alberta and university students, staff and faculty in the southern United States), there were barriers that were common to both groups. These included lack of time as the most important factor; lack of skills, fitness, and self-confidence; having no one to participate with; and lack of or inaccessibility of facilities. These commonalities also emphasize the importance of helping girls negotiate leisure constraints through supporting the development of better strategies by providing better education, services, and opportunities. Otherwise, these same problems may impede participation throughout their lives.

Support for the finding that cost is a constraint to young people's participation in physical activities through requirements for transportation, equipment, use of facilities and payment of fees, and the effect this has on availability and access to certain opportunities was provided in Coakley & White's (1992) study. Their results also supported lack of skill as a major constraint to sports participation by young people (Coakley & White). Eccles & Harold (1991) also found that girls' beliefs in their physical abilities and their assessments of whether or not they could meet the challenges of certain tasks were major determinants of attempting the activity. The constraints identified in these two studies (Coakley & White, Eccles & Harold) are similar to the obstacles to physical activity participation identified by teens in the Canada Fitness Survey (1983).

Henderson & Bialeschki (1993) studied the relationship between preferences and participation in women in the United States. They conducted interviews using both open- and close-ended questions. They found that interests or preferences did not always lead to participation when constraints were present. They also found that in some situations, such as when friends were engaged in an activity and women wanted to be with their friends, women participated in activities that they did not prefer. Finally, women learned about their preferences through participating (Henderson & Bialeschki). In addition, Henderson and Bialeschki found that individuals who felt successful in an activity wanted to continue participating, and those who did not feel successful were more apt to cease participation.

Initiating and Continuing Participation

Hultsman (1993a & 1993b) collected data from 940 Arizona boys and girls aged 10-15. Each student completed a self-administered questionnaire which required rankings and Likert scale responses. Hultsman (1993a) investigated early adolescents' perceptions of the influence of parents, other significant adults and peers on their decisions not to start or to quit participating in organized recreational activities. More students reported parents as influential in their decision not to initiate participation in an activity that interested them than identified peers or leaders. Students felt that decisions regarding school sports activities were more influenced by significant others than decisions regarding non-sports activities, either at school or in the community (Hultsman, 1993a).

For ceasing participation, the proportion of adolescents who identified leaders as influential in their decisions was much higher than the proportion who identified parents or peers. While all influences except leaders were reported to be higher for not joining than dropping out, the proportion of influence attributed to each factor shifted significantly. For instance, peers and leaders were more influential in decisions to drop an activity than to join one (Hultsman, 1993a).

Parents often determine the boundaries which limit the choices available to adolescents and thus influence initiating participation (Butcher, 1983; Dahlgren, 1988; Eccles & Harold, 1991, Howard & Madrigal, 1990, cited in Hultsman, 1993a; Sopinka, 1984). However once children have joined an activity, it is something about the experience that leads them to cease participation. One major limitation of Hultsman's (1993a) study is that sports activities outside of school were not included.

Hultsman (1993b) studied early adolescents' reasons for not beginning new activities and for not continuing participation in leisure activities. Eight reasons common to both initiating and ceasing participation were identified: lack of transportation, activity offered at the wrong time of day, perceived lack of skill, discouragement from friends, discouragement from parents, cost of the activity was too high, not liking the rules, and not liking the leader (Hultsman, 1993b). While the first six reasons were cited more often as reasons for not initiating participation in a new leisure activity, the last two were cited more often as reasons for ceasing participation. These last two make sense intuitively, as one would have much more information about the leader and the rules after actually experiencing the activity.

Jackson & Rucks (1993) also studied reasons for ceasing participation in leisure activities and barriers to initiating participation in leisure activities. Two hundred twenty-four male and 201 female grade 7-12 students in

Edmonton, Alberta completed a questionnaire with Likert scale responses. They found that when considered as a group, constraints to leisure ranked similarly in the importance and relative importance of their influence on ceasing and failing to initiate participation in leisure activities. For instance, the factor "friends into other things" was rated as at least somewhat important by 19.8% of respondents as a reason for ceasing participation and by 19.9% of respondents as a barrier to initiating participation and it was ranked as the 14th most important item for both ceasing and not initiating. However, they also found exceptions to this pattern. Cost, not knowing where to participate, not having a leisure partner, lack of transportation, and lack of skills were all more commonly described as significant barriers to initiating participation, whereas no item was significantly more strongly associated with ceasing participation (Jackson & Rucks).

Importantly, Jackson and Rucks (1993) also found that, in this and previous studies, items cited as only reasons for initiating or ceasing:

> ... ranked among the most important constraints perceived by respondents as accounting for their quitting a former activity or being unable to take up a new one ... their exclusion produces an exaggerated and therefore misleading picture of the similarity between different aspects of constrained leisure. Thus items of this kind should not be overlooked when identifying the constraints that are associated with a particular aspect of leisure behavior (p. 229).

This is what was done in the Hultsman (1993b) study. Although students ranked 14 items as reasons for not initiating, and 16 items for ceasing participation, only the 8 items that were given as reasons in both situations were analyzed.

Although many studies comparing constraints to initiating participation and constraints to continuing participation found many similarities (Hultsman, 1993b; Jackson & Dunn, 1991, cited in Jackson & Rucks, 1993; Jackson & Rucks, 1993; Searle & Brayley, in press, cited in Jackson & Rucks, 1993), certain differences were also apparent. For instance, cost, parental influence, influence of friends, lack of a leisure partner, lack of transportation, lack of skill, lack of opportunity and not knowing where to participate had a greater impact on decisions about initiating participation in an activity (Hultsman, 1993b; Jackson & Dunn; Jackson & Rucks, Searle &

Brayley). Conversely, lack of time, loss of interest, not liking the activity's leader or rules, and poor health or physical inability were more commonly cited as constraints to continuation in an activity (Hultsman, 1993b; Jackson & Dunn; Searle & Brayley). Because these factors are often some of the most significant in their respective situations, Jackson and Rucks (1993) and Hultsman (1993a) argued that constrained leisure should not be viewed as an internally homogenous concept. "Several, if not all, types of constraints become more or less important depending on the precise stage of the leisure decision-making process at which they are experienced, whereas other constraints are unique to a particular stage" (Jackson & Rucks, p. 229). Therefore, "... the results of an investigation of the constraints associated with one aspect of leisure behavior cannot accurately be used to make predictions about any other" (Jackson & Rucks, p. 229).

Negotiation Strategies

The type of negotiation strategy used in a given situation depends on the problem one is faced with (Jackson et al., 1993). Jackson et al. summarized three key findings from research by Kay & Jackson (1991) and Scott (1991). First, people use a variety of different strategies to negotiate constraints.

> Depending partly on the problems encountered, strategies include efforts to enhance the awareness of opportunities, acquisition of skills, alterations in the timing or frequency of leisure participation (including delayed or reduced participation), or modifications to other aspects of life to accommodate leisure needs (Jackson et al., p. 4).

Second, because most people use these strategies, constraints do not usually result in non-participation. Third, participation resulting from negotiation is somewhat different from how participation would have been if the constraints had not been present (i.e., scheduling, frequency of participation, and/or degree of specialization in an activity may be different) (Jackson et al.).

Jackson (1993) suggested that negotiation strategies may be behavioral or cognitive. Many of the behavioral strategies are revealed in the previous summary of Kay and Jackson's (1991) and Scott's (1991) research. These may involve adjusting either non-leisure aspects of one's life or the leisure itself (Jackson et al., 1993). Cognitive strategies include devaluing (not preferring) activities in which one perceives one cannot participate and balancing. The proposition that leisure participation is the product of balancing constraints and motivations corresponds with aspects of social exchange theory which suggests that individuals make decisions by weighing the personal costs and benefits of a certain action and engaging in situations in which they believe they will receive valued rewards (cf. Searle, 1991). This is also similar to the attitude component of Theory of Reasoned Action/ Theory of Planned Behavior in which an individual's beliefs about the consequences of exercising and personal evaluation of the desirability and importance of these consequences is considered to influence the decision to perform a certain behavior (cf. Brawley & Rodgers, 1993; Godin, 1994). Henderson and Bialeschki (1993) found evidence of balancing in the negotiation processes of women making decisions about leisure participation, particularly when women were making decisions about activities in which they had participated previously. This makes sense in that those who had participated would have a better understanding of the personal costs and benefits of a particular activity.

In Jackson & Rucks' (1995) study, 10% of the adolescents reported doing nothing or did not specify their strategies for negotiating constraints. Eleven percent described using cognitive strategies such as "...`I just put up with it,' `Ignore these problems,' and `Try to be positive and have fun'" (p. 94). Behavioral strategies for negotiating constraints were reported by 79% of the respondents (Jackson & Rucks, 1995). Of those who reported behavioral strategies, 44.3% altered their leisure participation while 55.7% adapted other facets of their lives to allow for participation (Jackson & Rucks, 1995). Behavioral strategies included (from most to least used): modifying time, developing skills, changing interpersonal relationships (i.e., participating with a friend), improving finances (mostly through getting a job), obtaining physical therapy, and changing leisure aspirations (Jackson & Rucks, 1995).

Limitations of Models of Leisure Constraints

Samdahl and Jekubovich (1993) suggested that previous research which focused on creating models of leisure constraints negotiation had failed to explain "*why* people are impelled to negotiate and compromise when confronted with leisure constraints" (p. 247). They also stated that existing models of leisure constraints are limited because they focus on participation rather than satisfaction (Samdahl & Jekubovich). This is an important concern as it is well documented that people are more likely to persist in an activity which they enjoy (Weiss, 1989; Fox, 1991).

> Motivation to negotiate leisure constraints stems most strongly from a desire to enhance leisure satisfaction, and constraints are most detrimental when they impact or diminish leisure satisfaction. Satisfaction, not participation, might be more representative of the actual priorities that shape leisure choices within the context of common daily routine (Samdahl & Jekubovich, p. 247).

Additional Theories

In addition to the theories of decision making, two theories which contribute to understanding how girls make decisions regarding participation or non-participation in free time physical activity are self-efficacy theory and cognitive evaluation theory.

Self-Efficacy Theory

Although it aids understanding, this theory is not discussed extensively because adolescent girls do not conceive of their free time physical activity choices in terms of behavior change. The theory of self-efficacy is social-cognitive in nature and stresses people's ability to make rational decisions and self-direct behavior change (Taylor, Miller, & Flora, 1988).

The crux of self-efficacy theory is that behaviour is a function of expectation (Bandura, 1986, cited in Maddux, 1993). Efficacy expectations concern an individual's belief in his or her ability to perform a specific behaviour in a specific context. Outcome expectancy is the person's perception of the specific consequences that may result from the behaviour. Thus, a person's decision to exercise is determined by his or her self-efficacy for exercise behaviour and perception of expected outcomes of exercise behaviour (Bandura, 1991, cited in Brawley & Rodgers, 1993). Therefore, enhancing one's belief in one's ability to perform the behaviour or increasing one's expectation of a valued outcome can encourage one to exercise (Brawley & Rodgers, 1993). One way of achieving this is through experiencing success in performing the behavior (Taylor et al., 1988).

Self efficacy is "... influenced by four main factors: persuasion from an authority, observation of others, successful performance of the behaviour, and physiologic feedback" (Taylor et al., 1988, p. 323). Maddux, Norton, and Stoltenberg (1986, cited in Rodgers & Brawley, 1991) proposed that for an outcome to influence one's behavioral intentions, the individual must both value the outcome and believe that the outcome is likely to occur as a result of the behaviour. Many studies have found positive associations between self-efficacy and physical activity in adults (King et al., 1992) (e.g., Poag-Ducharme & Brawley, 1993).

Cognitive Evaluation Theory

Cognitive evaluation theory is a theory of intrinsic motivation. "... Behavior is intrinsically motivated when it occurs in the absence of any apparent external reward" (Deci, 1977, p. 389) and "... is motivated by people's need to feel competent and self-determining in relation to their environment" (Deci, p. 390). It is suggested that the more a person is intrinsically motivated, the more likely it is that s/he will freely choose to participate in an activity (i.e., free time physical activity) (Frederick & Ryan, 1995). Cognitive evaluation theory suggests that intrinsic motivation is determined by self-determination and feelings of competence (Frederick & Ryan).

With regard to the self-determination aspect of this theory, it is suggested that environmental factors or events which support self-determination (i.e., those that encourage perception of an internal locus of causality) will maintain or increase intrinsic motivation in a certain activity while those that undermine self-determination (i.e., those that encourage perception of an external locus of causality) will decrease intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1992; Frederick & Ryan, 1995).

Feelings of competence refer to one's assessment of his or her abilities relative to the demands of a specific activity (Deci & Ryan, 1992). One necessary condition for feelings of competence is optimal challenge. Tasks that are much too easy or much too difficult relative to one's skill level, do not increase intrinsic motivation because they do not promote increased feelings of competence (Frederick & Ryan, 1995).

The effect of feedback on intrinsic motivation depends on its effect on feelings of competence and self-determination (Ryan, Vallerand, & Deci, 1984). Feedback that is perceived as providing information about one's efficacy in performing a task can increase feelings of autonomy and competence and thus intrinsic motivation.

However, feedback that is perceived as controlling (i.e., pressure to perform in a certain way or achieve a specific outcome) results in decreased feelings of self-determination and thus decreased intrinsic motivation. Further, feedback that conveys a message of incompetence decreases feelings of competence and is amotivating (Deci & Ryan, 1992; Frederick & Ryan, 1995). This negative feedback decreases feelings of competence and thus decreases intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan; Frederick & Ryan; Ryan et al.). Similarly, one's own internal thoughts and perceptions can decrease intrinsic motivation if they are perceived as controlling or amotivating and increase intrinsic motivation if they are perceived as informational (Deci & Ryan; Frederick & Ryan; Ryan, Koestner, & Deci, 1991). This relates to ego versus task involvement.

Ego involvement is "... motivation to perform so as to enhance or sustain self-esteem (Ryan, 1982; Ryan, Koestner, & Deci, 1991)" (Frederick & Ryan, 1995, p. 12). This contrasts with task involvement, in which "... individuals are focused on the task itself rather than the outcome of the activity" (Frederick & Ryan, 1995, p. 13). Frederick and Ryan summarized:

> cognitive evaluation theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) states that task-involved individuals are more likely to derive pleasure from participation, cope well with feedback, and demonstrate greater ongoing self-motivation, whereas ego-involvement represents an <<internal controlling>> state that undermines intrinsic motivation (p. 13).

Findings from a number of studies support aspects of cognitive evaluation theory (e.g., Vallerand & Reid, 1984).

Future Research

Descriptive studies predominate in the current literature on factors influencing young women's decisions regarding participation in sport and physical activity. Generally these studies consist of survey questionnaires with forced-choice answers. There are few studies examining interventions in this area. This has resulted in many generalizations regarding young women's participation choices but a lack of information on the critical boundaries of significance for these factors. Heightened discretion of these factors would improve understanding.

Researchers have suggested that future research should attempt to clarify the roles of the "socializee", significant others, socializing agents, contextual factors, and potential mediating factors in the socialization process (Brown et al., 1989; Weiss & Glenn, 1992). Further, there is a lack of research on how identified factors interact, how they play themselves out in girls' lives, and the social context in which these factors operate (Coakley & White, 1992; Weiss & Glenn). Most studies did not assess the relative importance of different factors. It is not yet known how identified factors exert their influence. Also, many studies have not assessed differences in responses from active and inactive girls. With the exception of a study by Coakley and White, described on page 10, researchers have not examined how girls make decisions regarding participation in physical activity.

Finally, although many studies have used questionnaires to investigate girls' attitudes toward physical activity and the factors that influence girls' involvement, interventions developed in response to these studies have not increased girls' physical activity to the desired level (Hoffman, 1995). This suggests that not all of the influences which operate in girls' decisions regarding participation in physical activity were addressed (Hoffman). Additional information is necessary for the development of effective interventions. Lewko and Greendorfer (1988) suggested that more qualitative work is needed to assess girls' own explanations of why they do or do not like certain activities.

Many researchers emphasized the necessity for future research to consider the various aspects of decision making (i.e., opportunity, process, human agency, and the influence of others) within the context of the total decision making experience in the lives of young women (Coakley & White, 1992; Crawford et al., 1991; Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993; Jackson, 1993; Jackson et al., 1993; Jackson & Searle, 1985; Searle et al., 1993; Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1993). The use of qualitative methods for integration and synthesis of these various aspects of decision making in leisure and physical activity participation and non-participation has been recommended (Coakley & White; Crawford et al.; Searle, 1991).

Further research on constraints to leisure has also been recommended. Areas for consideration include: identifying the specific types of social constraints which influence adolescents' decisions regarding participation and describing how they are manifested (Hultsman, 1993a); and investigating why people negotiate leisure constraints and the role of satisfaction in physical activity decision making (Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1993). In addition, Hultsman (1993a) suggested that future applied research should investigate ways of diminishing the negative influence of significant others on adolescents' physical activity decision making.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The grounded theory method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used in this study to explore and describe the process through which junior high girls made decisions to participate or not to participate in free time physical activity.

Methods

The goal of grounded theory is the development of an explanatory theory of human behavior (i.e., participation or non-participation in physical activity), a theory which emerges from understanding the situation (Morse & Field, 1995). Grounded theory is based in symbolic interactionism (Morse & Field). Symbolic interaction stresses that "the reality or meaning of a situation is created by people and leads to action and the consequences of action" (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986, p. 4) and that "human behavior is developed through interaction with others, through continuous processes of negotiation and renegotiation" (Morse & Field, p. 27).

The grounded theory method is appropriate for this study because the phenomenon of interest is a dynamic process (Morse, 1994). It is also appropriate because little is known about the process by which Canadian girls make decisions about free time physical activity participation. Grounded theory methods are appropriate for preliminary exploratory and descriptive studies of phenomena about which little is known (Glaser, 1992; Morse & Field, 1995).

Sampling

The informants were nine female junior high school students, aged 12-15 years, with no known physical or mental disabilities. The decision was made not to include those with disabilities because young women with disabilities may have different experiences with physical activity and different influences in their decision making process (i.e., different access issues). My informants needed to be able to reflect upon and articulate their experiences and the process by which they made decisions. I selected nine subjects with a broad range of experiences to maximize the scope and range of information I collected (Sandelowski, Davis, & Harris, 1989). Because previous studies (Eccles & Harold, 1991) suggested that decision making regarding physical activity participation may vary depending on past experiences with physical activity, phenomenal purposeful sampling was used for initial interviews (Sandelowski, 1995).

Recruitment

To recruit physically active informants, I approached leaders of community groups and asked each to nominate a girl from his or her group who might be willing to speak to me about what she did in her free time. I chose groups that provided different experiences (i.e., physical activity, no physical activity, recreational, competitive, class, group, team). Because I chose the groups in this way, I did not need to ask the leader to identify a girl with a particular experience. I did not ask the leader to consider specific characteristics because I believed this would help avoid any inappropriate screening by the leader. I limited the leaders' potential influence on me by recording and bracketing any information given to me about the girls and considering this in my analysis (Sandelowski, 1986).

I asked each leader in person, followed by a letter, to nominate a girl from his or her group who might be willing to speak to me about what she did in her free time. Originally I had planned to ask the leaders to give information sheets to potential informants. However, the leaders preferred to seek the girls' parents' permission and then give me the family's name and number. Thus, this was the procedure that was followed. None of the parents approached by the leaders refused permission. The leaders spoke to the parents and then I contacted either the girl or her parents directly. I relied on the leaders' discretion as to whether to speak to the girl or her parents first but I always set up the interview with the girl. Based on the leaders' advice, I spoke to the parents of all of the grade 7's (N=4), one of the grade 8's (N=2) and none of the grade 9's (N=3). At the first interview I met the mothers, and in one case the father, of all but one girl. All of the girls that I contacted agreed to be interviewed and all of their parents consented. Inactive girls (N=2) were identified through personal contacts and then recruited in the same manner as the active girls with our mutual contact fulfilling the leader role.

Prior to the first interview, I mailed each girl and her parents a description of the study and consent form and invited them to call me if they had any questions or concerns. None of them called me but one parent, whom I had not spoken to, called my advisor to check that the study was legitimate. Following that she did consent to her daughter's participation. Consent forms were returned to me at the time of the first interview.

As the study progressed, I employed theoretical sampling and chose additional informants who could provide me with information on emerging theory or concepts. Because data collection, coding, and analysis occurred simultaneously, I was able to use the emerging theory generated by analysis of previous data to direct further sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Each new informant was chosen to build upon or check previous information (Field & Morse, 1985; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Sampling continued until no new information was obtained from new respondents (Glaser & Strauss; Lincoln & Guba). When I had formulated my initial findings, I conducted a focus group with two of the individual interview informants and got feedback from one other girl to check the fittingness of my theory with their experiences and to discuss their responses to my conclusions (Kimchi, Polivka, & Stevenson, 1991; Sandelowski et al., 1989).

My main reason for choosing this method of recruitment was that I planned to invite individual interview informants to participate in the focus group at the end of the study. By having only one girl from each group attend the focus group, the girls would not know each other and I would avoid cliques and pre-existing patterns of leadership within focus group members (Basch, 1987). There would also be less pressure on focus group members if they did not have to worry about what significant others (friends and peers with whom they regularly interacted) thought of them. Additionally, I aimed to have as much diversity as possible among informants to help me to understand the influence of the different contexts in which decisions are made.

Another advantage of this recruitment method was that it took less time to recruit subjects compared to a recruiting strategy of sending an introductory letter one week, making a presentation the next week, and collecting consent forms the following week. This faster recruiting allowed me to do better theoretical sampling because I was able to choose informants as I went along. If I was looking at a three week delay each time, I would not have been able to do this. Finally, it is suggested that leaders speaking to the potential informants on the researcher's behalf can help the interviewer gain access and credibility (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986).

The major disadvantage to using leaders as gate keepers was that I might have been perceived to be "associated" with them. Thus, if a girl did not like the leader, or thought the leader stood for certain things, this would influence how she saw me. When I met the girls, I tried to minimize this by portraying myself as independent from the leaders. I think this was made easier by the fact that after the leaders' initial phone calls requesting permission for me to contact the girls, the leaders were not involved in any way.

Description of Informants

Through this recruitment process, I was able to get a range of informants with different experiences. The nine informants had different family structures. They lived in families with 1, 2, 3 or 4 children. I had at least one informant who was one of the following: eldest child, youngest child, and middle child. I had at least one informant who had at least one of the following: younger brother, younger sister, older brother, older sister, step-sister, step-brother, and half brother. Five girls lived with both parents, the other four lived primarily with their mothers. Three lived with their divorced single moms and one lived with her remarried mom. Of the divorced fathers, two lived in the same city and their daughters saw them often, and one lived in another province and his daughter saw him in the summer. The other girl also saw her dad. The girls were all middle class, Caucasian, born in Canada and all lived within a 45 minute drive of a mid-sized Canadian city.

The informants also had a broad range of experiences with free time physical activity. They participated in a number of different free time physical activities. Their free time physical activities varied in frequency, structure, skill level, level of competition, and social aspects (i.e., who they participated with). Interestingly, none of my informants said that they hated every possible physical activity. Even those who were not involved in free time physical activity on a regular basis had had a positive experience with physical activity in the last year. Table 1 describes the informants and is intended to provide context for the girls' comments in Chapter IV. The reader may refer back to this information to check "who said what".

In Table 1, recreational involvement refers to participation in unstructured activities. Class involvement refers to participation in activities where the focus is on learning new skills (i.e., learning to swim versus being on a competitive swim team). Involvement in club and community league differed in that the girls had to try out at the club level whereas anyone who wanted to participate was welcome

ID	Age	Grade	Current Level(s) of Involvement	Current Physical Activities (years participated)	Activities Quit in Last 2 Years (years participated)	Other Free Time Activities
A	12	7	recreational	soccer (2) swimming classes (10)	figure skating (1) Girl Guides (3)	piano jazz band reading, writing
B	13	7	recreational	ringette (7) swimming classes(9) synchronized swim (.16)		Girl Guides television time with friends
C	14	9	club, elite-competitive school team	cross-country skiing (3) soccer (6), track run (4), orienteering (4)	violin (3)	piano student council
D	14	9	club school team	soccer (6) wrestling (3) volleyball (2)	basketball (2)	piano time with friends school clubs
E	12	7	recreational community league	soccer (1), bike, swim, skate, & play at pool on own or with friend (many)	swimming lessons (1) soccer & baseball intramurals (1)	art lessons reading television
F	15	9	elite (20-30 hours per week)	dance- jazz (7), ballet (5), tap (1.5), & modern (.7)	soccer (6) track- run (1) -long jump (.1)	time with friends
G	14	8	recreational (3 times in last winter)	downhill skiing	*3 years ago: cross-country skiing horse back riding	works about 8 hours per month time with friends
H	12	7	recreational	jumping on trampoline at home		listen to music talk on phone time with friends
P	13	8	recreational school team	dance- ballet & jazz (9) cheerleading (2)	musical theatre (4)	drama- classes & plays television

Table 1 Description of Informants

at the community league level. Elite-competitive refers to sport participation at a national level and elite-class refers to dance participation at a pre-professional level.

As indicated by the asterisk, the activities that G quit fell outside of the two year parameter. However, this information is included to distinguish between the two least active girls' experiences. While H had been only minimally involved in physical activity since pre-school, G had been quite active and enjoyed physical activity. Three years previous, when her family lived out of the city, they cross-country skied every winter weekend and G often rode her horse.

The following continuum illustrates the relative physical activity involvement (skill level and time) of each informant (Figure 1).

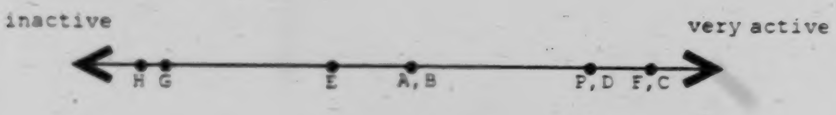

Figure 1
Continuum of Physical Activity Involvement

Data Collection

The methods of grounded theory were implemented (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I conducted two interviews with each individual teenage girl. The first were unstructured. The second interviews were more structured as I knew more about the girl and the emerging theory and had more specific areas I wanted to learn more about from each girl. However, I was always aware of the need for the girls to identify the boundaries of these issues and I remained flexible and willing to follow the informants to unanticipated areas of discussion and to respond to new insights. Following this, I attempted to conduct a focus group interview. I developed theoretical sensitivity to girls' participation through working with junior high girls in a physical activity setting and through reading literature on the subject.

As I coded the data and throughout the project, I wrote analytic memos to document my ideas, thoughts, insights, and feelings about themes and properties of categories and relationships in the emerging theory as they were formed (Field & Morse, 1995; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Writing and reviewing these memos helped me to identify where clarification, refinement and verification were needed and thus guided upcoming data collection (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986). Throughout the project I also wrote process memos to describe my observations about informant-researcher interaction; to describe my thoughts, feelings and behavior as I interacted with informants and reflected on the process; and to document the decisions I made as the study progressed and my rationale for them (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Sandelowski et al., 1989). These memos were also important in maintaining an audit trail to ensure rigor (Rodgers &

Cowles, 1993).

Individual Interviews

I collected individual interview data by conducting face-to-face unstructured interviews and audio-taping them. Interviews were conducted at the informants' homes, at the university, and once at a parent's workplace. I interviewed each of the nine informants twice.

Upon arrival at the first interview, the girls completed a short questionnaire (see Appendix A). While interviewing, I continually worked to identify and focus on those aspects of the interviews that were most pertinent to the issue I was investigating and most salient at that particular point in the data collection process.

Interviewing was an appropriate data collection method because Litt (1985) found that adolescents accurately described their own behavior. Ormond et al. (1991) stated that increasing metacognitive refinement enables adolescents to have greater awareness of and to better reflect upon and report how they are making or have made decisions. I conducted individual interviews because I was interested in how girls as individuals make decisions, not in how girls in groups make decisions. I felt it was very important to use unstructured interviews initially to allow girls to tell me what their experiences in the real world were like; to allow them to define the variables and boundaries of the issue; and to encourage them to express their views, feelings, beliefs, values, perceptions, attitudes and motivations in relation to physical activity decisions (Field & Morse, 1985; Kidder, 1981; Kidder & Judd, 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Orlich, 1978, cited in Brannigan, 1985; Patton, 1982). In addition, unstructured interviewing allowed me to explore the personal and social contexts in which these existed (Kidder). The use of open-ended questions was necessary because I was seeking responses that provided reasons and explanations (Kidder). It was essential for me to access this type of information to get an accurate picture of how girls made decisions regarding participation in free time physical activity.

My interview guide was a loosely organized index of topics to be investigated during the interview. Questions proceeded from general (what a girl liked to do in her free time) to specific (a particular instance when she made a decision regarding participation in an activity) as I discerned what unique experience each girl brought with regard to decision making and physical activity (Brannigan, 1985; Li, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Sudman & Bradburn, 1982). Examples of the questions for initial individual interviews are provided in Appendix B.

The questions in my interview guide for the first interview were piloted as part of another project. In this project, I first asked junior high girls to answer the questions. After this, particularly when clarification was needed, I asked them what they thought the questions meant. I also asked them for suggestions on how to make questions clearer, if there were any questions they thought I should add, and how I could improve my interviewing technique (Brannigan, 1985). During this process, questions #9, 14 and 15 were added to my previous interview guide and other questions were modified.

Prior to each second interview I made a written summary for myself of what I thought were the girl's main points from the initial interview. At the beginning of each second interview, I explained to the girl that I had made a summary of what I thought were her main points from the initial interview and that I wanted to take a few minutes to check these points with her. I specifically asked her to tell me if there was anything that she thought was important that was missing, if there was anything I said that she had not said, and if there was anything she felt I had misunderstood or that she could clarify. I then verbally summarized these points from highlights on my written summary.

This worked quite well both as a way of confirming information and as a way of "getting back into" the topic. I also found that my second interviews went better than the first and I wondered if part of this was because in providing the summary I was reinforcing that I really was listening to what they were saying. I also suspect that some of them were surprised that they had told me so much useful information when they may have felt like we were in a casual conversation.

The major limitation of audio-taping is that respondents may not speak as freely or disclose as much when they know there will be a permanent record of their responses (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I attempted to diminish this reaction by: allowing sufficient time for the respondents to become comfortable with both me and the recorder; continually working at rapport by listening to the girls, being responsive verbally and non-verbally, and by having an honest respect for their thoughts and experiences; assuring interviewees of anonymity and confidentiality; and reassuring them that they were not being judged. I also told each informant that we could turn off the tape recorder at any point in the interview if she felt uncomfortable. None took me up on this offer. Taping all interviews and transcribing the first ones myself allowed me to review my performance as an interviewer and identify areas for improvement in future interviews. Taping also provided me with a record of nonverbal cues such as tone of voice and hesitation (Lincoln & Guba).

I lessened the potential limitation of using only one investigator (Pyke & Agnew, 1991) in this study by keeping my original data and actively searching for alternative explanations. I also used my advisor as a debriefer and inquiry auditor to help to reduce the effects of this limitation (Mitchell, 1986; Rodgers & Cowles, 1993; Sandelowski et al., 1989). I also piloted my interview technique and initial interview guide by taping an interview with a junior high girl and reviewing it with my advisor. Because my pilot informant did not respond in a very different way from my other informants, I have chosen to include her interview in all data analysis and reporting.

There are a number of limitations to using a self-report method. People may answer in a way they believe is socially desirable or in way that is biased (i.e., not representative of their true experiences or feelings about a subject, or slanted to try to create a certain impression) (Pyke & Agnew, 1991; Sudman & Bradburn, 1982). I attempted to lessen these limitations by ensuring confidentiality and trying to convey the message that I was not there to judge the girls. In addition, I interviewed each girl more than once and used member checks (during the interviews and at the beginning of each second interview) to see if what she said before still "fit" for her. This gave her the opportunity to change her mind, clarify, or elaborate on previous responses. Clarifying and elaborating were much more common than changes of mind but some changes did occur. I tried to avoid the limitations of "group think" and social pressure by conducting initial interviews individually rather than in a group. Other limitations include forgetting and unintentional selective memory (Sudman &

Bradburn). Because I was unable to control these limitations, the best I could do was to try to identify them and consider them in my analysis (Strean & Eklund, 1995). At the beginning of the initial interviews, I reviewed with each girl that I wanted her to be as honest as possible and to try to speak from her own perspective and experience rather than reporting what she thought the "average girl" would think. I believe that this worked because on occasion, particularly in later interviews when I was trying to get a sense of the commonness or uniqueness of certain experiences, the girls would say "I don't think that but lots of junior high girls...", so they were clearly distinguishing between their experience and what they thought others did. Following each interview, I made field notes to record my observations and impressions.

Focus Group

When I had formulated my initial findings, I had planned to use a focus group made up of individual interview informants, to check the fittingness of my theory with their experiences and to discuss their responses to my conclusions (Kimchi et al., 1991; Sandelowski et al., 1989). I attempted to conduct two focus groups at the university. On the first attempt, only one of the four invited girls (the one that I picked up) showed up. When I phoned the other three, two said they were sick and one reported that she had forgotten. Due to time constraints, I attempted to organize a second focus group on short notice. Three girls said they would attend for sure and the girl who had attended the attempted focus group said that she would attend if she did not have too much homework. The day before the second focus group attempt, one girl's mom called and cancelled and on the day of the interview the fourth girl found that she had too much homework to attend. Two girls were unavailable on that day and the other three I did not invite, one because she was out of town and the other two because I felt they would upset the balance of the focus group.

On my first focus group attempt I did receive feedback on my findings from the lone attender. On the second attempt, I received feedback from the two girls who were able to come. This feedback is discussed on p. 97.

Data Analysis

I used the grounded theory techniques of Strauss & Corbin (1990). Throughout my data analysis, I made comparisons and asked questions (Strauss & Corbin). After transcription, I coded my data. First, I used open coding which involved conceptualizing and categorizing the data. I went through the transcripts line by line and gave "... each discrete incident, idea, or event, a name, something that stands for or represents a phenomenon" (Strauss & Corbin, p. 63). Open codes were then grouped into categories according to similarities and differences in content. Variations and distinctions were identified. Thus, the theoretical properties of each category were clarified (Strauss & Corbin).

Next, I did the second level of coding, axial coding. Through axial coding, I identified the relationships between categories and their subcategories and properties (Morse & Field, 1995; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Subcategories of the phenomena are context, strategies for dealing with the phenomena, and consequences of these strategies (Strauss & Corbin). After axial coding, I used selective coding to refine and develop categories; relate categories to the core process and each other; and explain the relationships among them (Strauss & Corbin).

I continued collecting and coding data until I reached a saturation point where no novel or pertinent information about the characteristics of the categories was produced (Morse & Field, 1995). This saturation was evident in the emergence of one dominant process which explained how the other categories were related and described how girls processed the decision of whether or not to participate in free time physical activities (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986; Morse & Field). During this process, I deliberately searched for negative cases and used these to refine my analyses and explanations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After saturation was reached, I compared the process that emerged with existing literature, sorted memos, and summarized the theoretical explanations (Morse & Field).

I used NUD.IST (Qualitative Solutions and Research NUD.IST) in my data analysis to code and sort my data by categories. I also used Word Perfect in this process. I maintained a file of interviews in their original transcription so that I could review context as needed. This method also enabled review of my selection processes and allowed for revising.

Rigor

Rigor was increased by addressing informant selection, influences on informants, interviewer bias, and use of triangulation (Denzin, 1970; Sandelowski et al., 1989).

Informant Selection

Informant self-selection was a potential limitation of this study. However, as none of the girls approached by either a leader or myself declined to participate, the more salient issue in this case was my selection of the groups and leaders. One leader did not respond to my request and some had no girls of the appropriate age. I attempted to include girls with as diverse backgrounds and experiences as possible. I have also described my informants in detail in an attempt to allow readers to discover of whom these girls are representative. No subjects withdrew from the study. Although I was unable to get them all together for a focus group, all of the girls I spoke to were willing to participate and offered to come at a specific time. Unfortunately I was unable to find a time that was possible for everyone to attend. Further, in comparing and contrasting my results with other research in this area, I found that many of my findings were congruent with other studies, which increases the dependability and trustworthiness of my study.

Influences on Informants

Subject maturation and reactivity effects of the researcher must be examined. Thus, I maintained an awareness of and monitored the impact of events which occurred prior to and during data collection. Also, I kept field notes regarding researcher-informant interactions and used these to assess subject maturation and change during the study (Denzin, 1970). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that prolonged engagement can increase the credibility of findings and interpretations. I conducted at least two interviews with each girl and consistently worked to establish and maintain rapport and the trust of the respondent.

Interviewer Bias

I addressed my biases by identifying and bracketing my thoughts and opinions about how girls make decisions regarding physical activity participation. To minimize the threat of "going native", I kept detailed notes on my own impressions, actions and interactions to document changes over time in myself as an observer. Also, I feel that this threat was minimal due to my limited involvement with the informants. When I was not interviewing them, I retreated to the reality of my own adult world where my responsibilities and experiences were quite different from those of my informants. Because of this, I was never truly immersed in their culture. Further, the decision making literature tends to be of the researcher-as-other variety. Thus the literature provided balance for any over-identification with the girls' attitudes.

I deliberately searched for negative cases and used them to refine my analyses and to reduce bias caused by getting attached to an idea and seeing more support for it than was actually there (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I maintained an audit trail and all of my information (tapes, transcripts, data reduction and analysis products, data reconstruction and synthesis products, journals with process notes and rationale for decisions made) (Halpern, 1983, cited in Lincoln & Guba) was available so my advisor and thesis committee could audit my decision trail, data collection and analysis techniques, and interpretations. This helped to ensure rigor (Mitchell, 1986; Rodgers & Cowles, 1993; Sandelowski et al., 1989).

Triangulation

Triangulation was achieved through the use of multiple interviews, different respondents, and multiple methods (individual and focus group interviews) (Pyke & Agnew, 1991; Strean & Eklund, 1995). I conducted at least two interviews with each of nine informants. This time triangulation allowed me to assess whether their opinions and feelings about decision-making regarding physical activity participation remained stable or changed across points in time (Kimchi et al., 1991; Mitchell, 1986). Generally they remained stable.

Preliminary member checking of data and interpretations was carried out during each interview. At the beginning of the second interview, I reflected back to the informant what I believed were her main points in the first interview. I asked her if it sounded right to her and if there was anything she wanted to add or clarify. Most of the girls did clarify or elaborate upon points from the initial interview. As well, member checks of analytic categories and conclusions were conducted with the respondents as the study progressed (Strean & Eklund, 1995).

When I had formulated my findings, I checked the fit of my theory with the experiences of three of my informants, two of them in a focus group. This proved to be very helpful. The girls confirmed the categories (factors in the discussion section) I had developed but disagreed with some of the ways I had related them to each other. The girls clarified these relationships. I had friends directly influencing decisions to try and leaders, match and doing well directly influencing the decision to commit. They told me that these influences all worked through enjoyment. As a result of this clarification, I went back to the original data and re-examined these relationships and came to agree that the relationships the girls in the focus group spoke of fit the data.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this study was sought and obtained from the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation Ethics Review Committee prior to data collection. Informed consent was obtained from the girls and their parents. Consent forms are provided in Appendix C1 and C2. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured by giving each informant a pseudonym and using this rather than their name on transcripts and by storing the "key" with informants' names and pseudonyms separate from the data (Field & Morse, 1985). In reporting this study, care has been taken not to describe informants in an identity-revealing way. Data will be locked up for seven years and then tapes erased and transcripts shredded.

At the end of the study, I prepared a summary of my findings and mailed these to the girls and their parents.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Editorial Notes

Some editorial notes are necessary before proceeding to the introduction of this chapter. First, the informants in this study are sometimes referred to as "the girls". This is how they referred to themselves. Second, many of the girls' comments have been edited. The reason for this is that, while sometimes the "and uh"'s and the "like"'s give clues as to the context and character of the comment, sometimes they just make it very difficult to read a comment as it was spoken. Often, I have edited the "extra words" in a quotation to make it easier to read while not changing the content of what was said. Below are some typical examples of this.

Original:

> And um, and, but, but at our dance school it's not really, it's not really competitive where it is at um, like um the [name of another dance school] school or a lot of other places. And that's, that's um, that's why I like dancing at this school, at [name of school].

Edited to:

> ... at our dance school it's not really ... competitive ... that's why I like dancing at this school... (F2)

Original:

> Well, if you have like a moderate amount [of self-confidence] when you go in, to a, a like whatever, an activity, um, then it could grow (Mfg: Oh okay.) or it could, it could um, drop. (Mfg: Mhm.) Depending on what you think, how you do. (Cfg)

Edited to:

> Well, if you have like a moderate amount [of self-confidence] when you go in ... then it could grow (Mfg: Oh okay.) or it could ... drop. (Mfg: Mhm.) Depending on what you think, how you do. (Cfg)

Original:

> Yeah maybe it, I don't know it increases your oh, I forget what it's it called, uh, self-esteem. (Mfg: Mhm.) Or something like if you start, s- sorry, if you start something and you find that you are good at it then you would want to continue because you think, you know, you're good at it. Or well, you're not bad at it or something. (Cfg)

Edited to:

> Yeah maybe it ... increases your ... self-esteem. ... If you start something and you find that you are good at it then you would want to continue because you think, you know, you're good at it. Or well, you're not bad at it or something. (Cfg)

Original:

> And then, you know, people, people are going to, people are going to notice it. (F1)

Edited to:

> And then ... people are going to notice it. (F1)

Original:

> Um, it's more of a team effort. Um, like, you need, like you need all, like six players to win the game not just one person (MF2: Mhm.) can win it. Whereas in dance, you're ba-, you're basically um, well alo-, not alone but um, you're performing for yourself and the audience in most cases (MF2: Mhm.) Um, you're not, you can't, like you're there for yourself, you're not there for anybody else (MF2: Mm.) and, and to perform, um, unless, like, like you do have to work together it's just, it's not the same team effort as it is in soccer (MF2: Mhm.) as in dance. (F2)

Edited to:

> Um, it's more of a team effort. ... You need all, like six players to win the game not just one person (MF2: Mhm.) can win it. Whereas in dance ... you're performing for yourself and the audience in most cases ... you're there for yourself, you're not there for anybody else ... you do have to work together it's just, it's not the same team effort as it is in soccer ... (F2)

The third editorial note is an explanation of referencing for the quotations from informants. The brackets following the quotes indicate where each quote came from. The letter is the informant's ID and the number indicates in which interview the quote is from. For instance, "F2" is used for a quote from F's second interview. In instances where parts of conversations are quoted, the letter indicates the speaker. M is the researcher. The ID of informant I was with and whether it was a first or second interview are indicated by the letter and number after the M. The lower case letters "fg" indicate a quote from the focus group interview (i.e., "Cfg" indicates a statement made by C in the focus group interview).

Finally, Figure 1 is reproduced below as a reminder of each informant's involvement in free time physical activity. A further description of each girl is provided in Table 1 (p. 83).

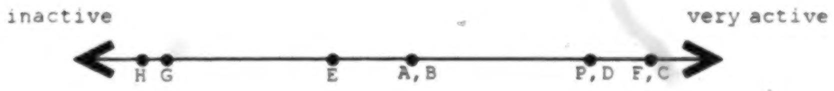

Figure 1
Continuum of Physical Activity Involvement

Introduction to Chapter IV

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the process by which a junior high girl makes the decision to participate or not to participate in a specific physical activity in her free time. In order to understand this process it is important to first consider the context in which girls perceive this process to occur. Thus girls' experiences of decision making and perceptions of the influence of others are discussed first. This is followed by a description of a model which illustrates the girls' decision making process and a discussion of each factor in it.

The Girls' Experience

"It Just Happens"

> ...I don't know how it happens, it just does. But it's not conscious, I don't write it out or anything. (D2)

The junior high school girls who participated in this study did not conceptualize decision making as a process. The girls identified decision making as the moment when they said "I'll do it" or "I won't do it" and they really did not experience a "decision making process" that preceded or encompassed "The Decision". They did, however, believe that some things and people outside themselves influenced how they made that decision.

Many times the girls made the point that they did not deliberately sit down and consciously consider each factor and I am not suggesting that they did. For them, decision making happened all at once. All factors were evaluated simultaneously as opposed to in a linear or step-by-step fashion.

> Like there is no decision making process, I don't think ... you just know if you like it. ... there's no steps or special procedure... (B2)

> In junior high we have this thing called "On Track" which is like this health sort of thing. And they teach you how to make decisions. And I don't know, I never took notes on it because I thought it was extremely dumb, (M. laughs) and unuseful. So, I can't really remember but it's something like you state the options and then you decide the pros and cons and then you measure it all out on this thing and then you make your decision. I don't agree with that. I don't know how I make decisions really. It, I think it varies on the situation and what's involved and all the variables and stuff. But I don't, I don't know if there is one -- a constant, subconscious sort of decision making process. (C2)

D also described her decision making as changing according to the situation.

> D2: I think it's more like based on the situation (MD2: Mm.) that I decide things. ...
> MD2: So you don't use the same thing every time necessarily?
> D2: No, for sure not because like how I'm feeling and what I'm doing at that moment ... affects a lot.

An alternate explanation is that girls only attended to the aspects of the decision that were missing or needed consideration. For instance, if a girl's friend asked her to join the Southeast recreational soccer team, she might "know" without thinking about it that she would have a friend there, that she liked soccer, and that she felt she was good at soccer. As a result, she had already covered the opportunity, friends, enjoyment, and self-confidence aspects of her decision without thinking about them. Therefore, the only things she had to "consider" were time and her parents' views. This is congruent with the girls' explanation that their decision making was intuitive and consideration of these factors automatic. This could also explain why decision making would change according to the situation- because different factors would be "known", leaving different factors to be "considered".

> You know what's done and what you have to consider and then, (MA2: Mhm.) you just, if everything's O.K. then you just go for it, I guess. (A2)

> ... There isn't really total priority things when, like if I decide to go into swimming then I wouldn't say `O.K. well are the people nice?' `Yes.' `O.K. well do I have the time for this?' `Yes.' (Laughs) `Do I, uh, I don't know, do I like the sport?' You know I don't have this ... priority list of what I do ... I think it totally depends on what, what the decision is. (C2)

> MD2: So, even the different factors, it's not like you have a list of factors in your head and you go `this one applies to this situation, this one doesn't' you just somehow know what you have to think about?
> D2: Yeah. ... I'm just sort of like `it doesn't feel right, no' (MD2: Mhm.) or `yeah it feels good, okay'. Like I'm more instinctive (laughs).

Another important aspect of the girls' experience of decision making was that it involved two stages: deciding whether or not to try an activity, and deciding whether or not to commit to an activity. This was important because while they felt that they could try an activity and quit at any time if they wanted, they perceived the decision to commit as the last decision point until the activity ended. For instance, once they signed up for a season of soccer or a series of swimming classes they did not feel that they made a decision each day about whether or not to attend. The next point at which they saw themselves as having a choice was when the season or series of classes ended, they again made a decision to commit or not for the next time period.

"I Decided By Myself"

When asked about the influence of others on their decision making, the girls seemed to consider only direct influences such as "I think you should/ should not ...", not indirect influences such as others finding opportunities, drawing their attention to certain ads, or influences on money and transportation. However, these components were mentioned in other contexts such as "pressure", "encouragement" and "support". The girls seemed to perceive influence as roughly equivalent to another person deliberately trying to talk them into or out of participation in a certain activity.

It was important to the girls that they made their own decisions, that they were the ones who determined "I'll do it" or "I won't do it". Because of this, and because they did not perceive a "decision making process", it was difficult for them to explain how parents and friends played a part in how they made their decisions. For instance, in three cases the girls said that it was their decision alone and they themselves were their only influence but then they went on to recount how a parent showed them an ad in the paper or a friend asked them to come and try out. At other times, girls did recognize an influence of encouragement or support.

> ... I think you should be allowed to decide what you want to do yourself. (D1)

> Well ringette was kind of my decision. My mom said, she said `I saw an ad in the newspaper' and she ... told me that it was like hockey and my brother played hockey. (MB1: Mm hmm.) So I liked like what he did in hockey so I said `I want to try it' and so I got into ringette through my own decision. (B1)
>
> Well, at first, um, my friends were encouraging me ... and then family coaxed me into going and then I tried out ... I'm glad I made the choice to go into soccer. (E2)
>
> Like there's no influence, like my mom, or whatever, she says you can do whatever you want as long as it's appropriate. (MB2: Mhm.) So, there's no influence there. (B2)
>
> Um, yeah people influence me to keep on going but it's, a lot of it is just my part. ... But um, yeah, most of it's my part because I'm the one doing it. (F1)

Description of Figure 2: Informants' Decision Making Process

Figure 2 portrays how the informants made a decision to participate or not to participate in a physical activity in their free time. I used a grounded theory approach and the girls confirmed that Figure 2 represented the factors that they eventually considered in some way before (in their terms of one-moment decision making) making a decision regarding free time physical activity participation.

The diamonds represent decision points (to try or not try the activity and to commit or not commit to it). In order for a girl to make the decision to participate in free time physical activity, each of the essential factors in the ovals must be evaluated positively. If any are not present or are evaluated negatively, the result will be a decision not to participate in physical activity. The factors not in

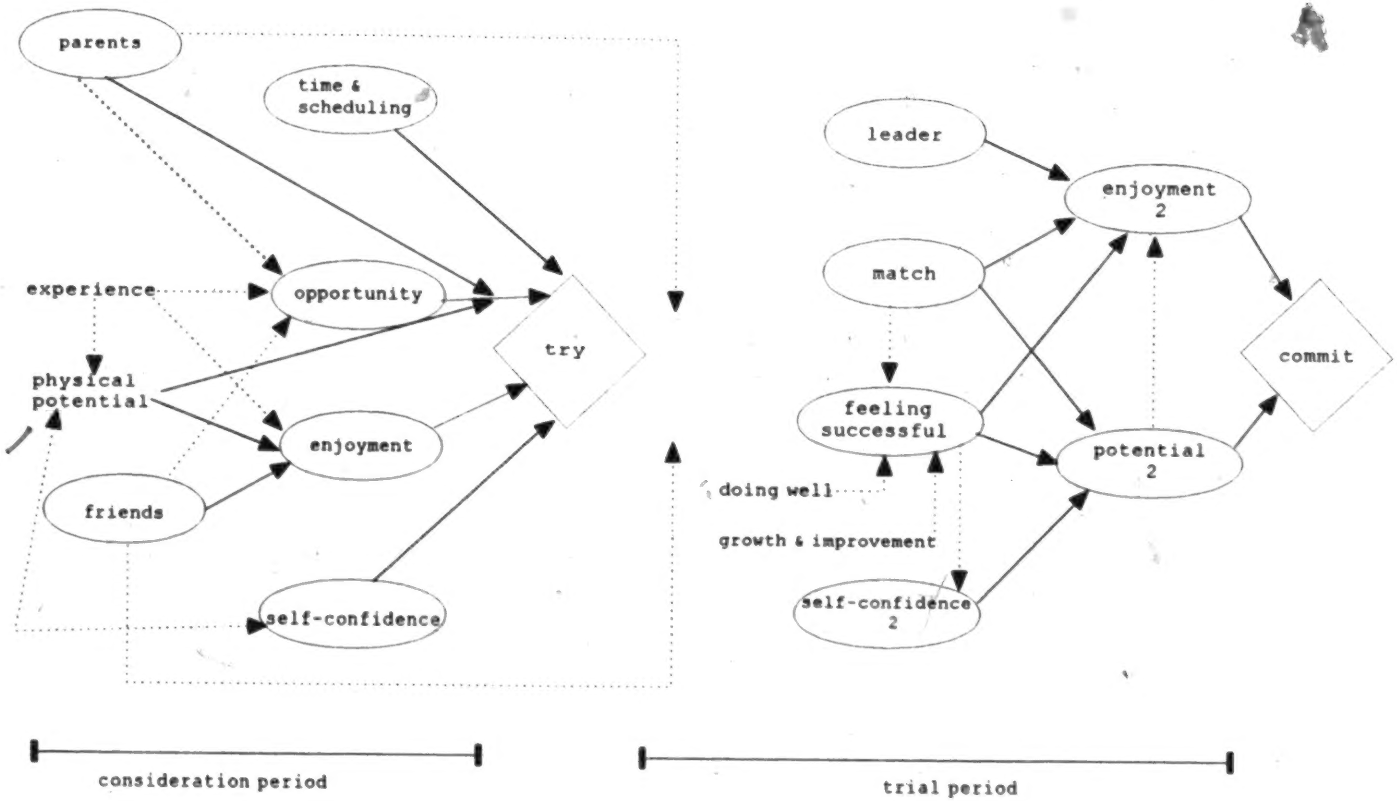
parents
time & scheduling
experience
opportunity
try
physical potential
enjoyment
friends
self-confidence
leader
enjoyment 2
match
commit
feeling successful
potential 2
doing well
growth & improvement
self-confidence 2
consideration period
trial period

Figure 2
Informants' Decision Making Process

ovals are modifying factors that are not essential to decision making but which influence essential factors.

The process follows temporally from left to right. Each factor that influences the decision to try continues to influence the decision to commit although the girl may have more information about the factors at the time she makes a decision about committing (i.e., she thinks she will be able to make a friend in the activity when making the decision to try, she knows she has a friend in the activity when making the decision to commit). The order of factors from top to bottom is not significant. The lines represent influences. Solid lines represent influences that are always present when the factor is present (i.e., the solid line from potential to between opportunity and try indicates that if a girl has a perception of her potential, this mediates the influence of opportunity on the decision to try but not every girl has a perception of her potential). Broken lines represent influences that may or may not be present. The arrow indicates the direction of influence (i.e, friends influence enjoyment, potential and self-confidence influence each other).

This one decision making process described free time physical activity decision making for all girls regardless of their age, skill, and level of physical activity or inactivity. They all described the same factors. Variability occurred by the "standards" or criteria each girl had for evaluating factors as positive or negative rather than by using different factors or a different process. Additionally, the seriousness of these decisions regarding free time physical activity involvement varied between girls and affected the depth with which they considered these factors, especially for the decision to commit. For instance, for some of the girls involved at lower levels, free time physical activity was just something to do other than watch t.v., while for some of the girls involved at more advanced levels, this decision represented a decision about a way of life. It was a decision that would determine how a significant portion of their time and energy would be spent and thus would automatically exclude other activities. This will be discussed further in the "Importance of Variety" section (p. 135).

The Decision to Try

The informants identified parents, friends, time and scheduling, opportunity, enjoyment and self-confidence as essential factors in making the decision to try or not to try a free time physical activity. Modifying factors were experience and physical potential.

Parents

Parents influenced girls decision making regarding free time physical activity participation in two ways. First, parents were often the source of information about an activity (i.e., they saw an ad or found the opportunity).

Second, parents set the boundaries of the girls' choices because parents' permission was required for participation. Even in cases where the girl's desire to participate was inspired by a friend, parents got involved at the registration stage for structured activities. Parents also influenced decisions regarding unstructured activities through payment for equipment (e.g., skates, bathing suit, ball, bike) or facilities (e.g., pool, rink) or simply by giving girls permission to participate (i.e., to go to the park, to ride their bikes in certain areas).

Parental influence was sometimes direct such as specifying a particular activity or quota (i.e., at least one sport and one art) for the girl to do or by limiting her activities. In limiting activities, parents restricted the amount of time, number of activities, or forbade participation in certain activities. Parental influence was also sometimes indirect, such as "screening" opportunities for their daughters (i.e., telling them about the availability of some opportunities and not others).

> Yeah my mom does that all the time (laughs). Yeah she'll suggest like one thing that I can do but then if I read the article, ... there would be a whole bunch of other things (Mfg: Mm.) that I could also be interested in. (Mfg: Mhm.) But she only sees that one, few things (giggles). (Cfg)

Parents were also always responsible for girls' first experiences with physical activity outside of school and these experiences left a lasting impression. Although only about half of the girls were still involved in the same activity, 7 of the 9 junior high girls mentioned pre-school physical activity experiences which they felt had an important impact on their current free time physical activity participation.

The girls felt that parental influence was negative when the girls were opposed to what parents were encouraging or pressuring them to do. However, often the girls did not have anything in mind and parents gave them the idea of what activity to do. Parents were more involved when the girls were younger and when the activity was new. Parents also influenced girls' opportunities for participation in free time physical activities because they usually provided financing and transportation. Parents were also important to girls' physical activity participation because they provided support and encouragement.

Similar to the situation with friends, the broken line from parents to beyond try reflects a situation in which some girls moved directly to the trial period without making a decision to try the activity. These were situations in which parents insisted that girls try a specific activity.

> ...sometimes there isn't really a process there's just [parents saying] `this is what you're doing. Go' `Do you like it? Stay.' `If you don't, don't.'. (P2)

Patty commented that sometimes it was good to be "forced" to try an activity:

> ... sometimes um, people who are really shy, ... they want to but ... they don't want to, at the same time. (MP2: Mm.) They're scared. (MP2: Mm hmm.) So, so sometimes it takes a little push, like from a parent or a teacher. (P2)

After trying the activity the girls made the decision about committing to the activity.

> I know when parents are the ones who say `you HAVE to do this' or `I want you to do this', ... they [girls] won't do it or they won't like it. ... It's like if you're doing it because you want to, then you'll likely stay with it but if you're doing it because someone else told you to, you know, it's not as strong. (D1)

Perceptions of the influence of parents varied. D commented that the influence of parents was unpredictable:

> ... parents are thought to influence a lot and they do but at the same time it can be reversed, you know. Like if a parent says `I think you should do this', hey 50% say they will and 50% say they will do the exactly the opposite. (D1)

In any case, all of the girls agreed that parents had a strong influence.

Friends

The factor "friends" was evaluated positively when girls either had a friend in the activity or believed that they could make a friend in the activity. Thus, when making their decisions about trying an activity, girls wanted to know who was involved in the activity (people they knew? people they liked? people their age who might be potential friends?). The less experience a girl had with an activity and the more shy she felt, the more important it was to her that she knew a friend in the activity when she was starting.

> 'Cause if you don't know people, I feel uncomfortable and if I don't know somebody I'll be like quiet. (MH1: Mm hmm.) Then like, it's hard. (H1)

Those who said they would join a new activity even if they did not know anyone also told of experiences of being scared in this new situation. However, compared with those who said they would not join an activity without a friend, those who would join had greater beliefs that they would make friends in the activity.

Friends' Influence

Friends were a common source of information about opportunities for free time physical activity involvement. All of the girls involved in structured physical activity programs became aware of the opportunity to do at least one of their activities through a friend or sibling. Many girls started an activity because a friend or sibling did it and liked it so they decided to try it also. Siblings are included with friends because not all siblings were considered to be influential and those that were acted as friends.

The broken line from friends to beyond try reflects a situation in which some girls moved directly to the trial period without making a decision to try the activity. Some girls went to activities that they would not go to otherwise because a friend wanted someone to go with. In these cases, the girls made more of a decision to support a friend than to try an activity but after trying the activity they did make the decision about whether or not to commit.

The informants reported that friends who also participated in the sport or physical activity encouraged their participation. However, many of the informants felt that some of their peers allowed friends to influence them too much. They said that they would participate in an activity even if their friends discouraged them. They felt strongly that adolescents should not let peers stop them from doing what they wanted and that they should not do things only because their friends wanted to.

> In a way I get some pressure like that from my friends but I just say `I wanna do it. If you don't wanna do it it's fine, (MB2: Mhm.) but it's my choice and you don't have to come in with me'. (B2)

> ... Some people in my school, like they take a lot of things just 'cause their friends are doing them. ... Like I don't do it because my friends are doing it and I think if you're really serious about something ... then, um, what other people say or whatever doesn't really matter to you or, you know, influence you like in a bad way. (F1)

The girls reported having both male and female friends although generally they were closer to their female friends than their male friends. The older girls tended to have more male friends than the younger girls. The girls did not feel that male and female friends influenced them differently but felt that their closest friends had the greatest influence.

Once they joined, being with friends was one of the best things about the girls' free time activities (both physical and non-physical). Friends made the activity fun.

And enjoying being with friends was one of the things that made active girls decide to commit to physical activities.

Many of the girls also said that one of the great things about being with their friends was that they shared common interests and some felt this made it easier for the friends to understand what the girls were going through. However, the importance placed upon this shared interest differed between girls. For instance C, in talking about what it's like to train for national level competition, said:

> I think only the people who understand actually, and they mean it when they say they understand, are the people who do it as well. (C2)

However, D felt:

> ... even though you get a feeling of belonging and acceptance through it, through sports ... I need to also feel accepted outside of sports. (MD2: Mhm.) Like I'm accepted even though I'm not part of a team. (MD2: Mhm.) Or even though they [friends] don't have a reason, you know? (D2)

Regardless of how important they thought doing the same activities was, the essence of what all of them said was that they wanted their friends to accept them for who they were.

> ... I just have a really good time with my friends, ... I can be myself. I don't have to pretend. (F1)

One other theme was that when they were with their friends, girls decided what to do by consensus. B's explanation was typical:

> ... My best friend and I, if she wants to do something but I don't want to do it, like we'll think of something else, that we both want to do. (B1)

Contrary to popular perception, the girls did not feel that friends replaced parents as the major influence in their decisions. They felt that although friends became very important during the junior high years, parents still remained very important. I also got the sense that although they sometimes felt their friends understood them better than their parents, they trusted their parents and respected their wisdom. Although they did not always agree with their parents, these teens did feel that their parents were looking out for the girls' best interests and had a good idea of what those were.

Time and Scheduling

For time and scheduling to be evaluated positively, a girl had to believe that she had both absolute time available and that she would be able to work the activity into her schedule. Lack of time was the most common reason for deciding not to participate in free time physical activity. This was true for the girls across ages, grades, activities, levels of physical activity involvement, and family structures. Scheduling with other activities was a factor for all those involved in structured physical activities (i.e., the activity they were considering was on at the same time as a more important or more preferred activity). For example, three girls tried out for and made school teams but then were unable to play on the team because practices or games conflicted with other activities.

> ... I'd still play it [soccer] if I had the time but I don't have the time anymore. (F1)

> ...I was gonna learn how to wrestle once (MC2: Mmm.) but then I had no time because it was in the winter. (C2)

> 'Cause I had soccer and that [taking art also] would be too much. (E2)

Scheduling with the family was a concern for those with a younger brother or sister in elementary school.

The girls also felt that time and scheduling were the major obstacles they had overcome in order to participate in the free time physical activities that they did. The two girls who were most highly involved in physical activities in their free time anticipated that lack of time would be the thing that eventually forced them to give up some of their activities.

One interesting observation was that the girls who were less involved in free time activities did not spend the majority of their time doing the things they enjoyed most. Sometimes this was practical and influenced by opportunity or necessity. For instance, one girl's favorite activity was downhill skiing but she could not just decide to go out and go skiing on her own. Another girl spent a lot of time biking even though she did not especially enjoy it because she was using her bike as a means of transportation. Sometimes the reason was not as clear. In one case, a girl watched television for 5.5 hours every night and did not swim every night even though she had a season pass and stated that recreational swimming was her favorite free time activity.

Opportunity

In order to make a decision to try an activity, a girl needed to believe that she could access the opportunity to do it. For unstructured activities this meant that the weather or season was right or that she had the equipment. For more structured activities this meant that the girl had knowledge of a specific program or class. An opportunity may have existed, but if the girl was not aware of it, she could not make a decision to try it. As mentioned previously, girls often became aware of opportunities through parents and friends. Another way of gaining awareness of opportunities was through experience and exposure. The girls had these thoughts on opportunities:

> ... If the choices are available and like, you have the choice to do it, then you, you'll try it (B2)
>
> Um, well if the opportunity is there then I'll do it. (MC2: Mhm.) But if it isn't there and I'm not completely into the sport or activity or whatever it is then I won't really take too much time to look for it. (C2)

The line from parents which intersects the line between opportunity and the decision regarding trying an activity is to indicate that parents mediated the girls' ability to take advantage of an opportunity to try an activity. Even when a girl was aware of an opportunity, if her parents forbade or strongly discouraged her participation, this made the opportunity, while theoretically available, not a viable option for her. A parent's approval, or at least lack of disapproval, was necessary for the girls in the study to proceed with decision making.

Physical potential also mediated opportunity. A girl's beliefs about what she could do in a particular physical activity in the future (i.e., whether or not she could meet the demands of the tasks involved) determined whether or not she believed an existing opportunity was really an opportunity that she could take advantage of it.

Enjoyment

Not surprisingly, enjoyment was a major consideration in the girls' decisions regarding free time physical activity participation. In order to evaluate enjoyment positively when making a decision to try or not to try an activity, the girls had to think that the activity would be enjoyable.

The girls identified enjoyment as a very important reason for deciding to participate in free time physical activity. In their experience, many of the other factors (friends, potential, leader, match, feeling successful) influenced decision making through their influence on enjoyment. This was the "bottom line". In the end, much of decision making came down to "will I or do I like it?".

ME2: Okay, um, what would make you want to join a new activity, like?
E2: Um, if I thought ... I'd enjoy it and I'd keep on playing.

MH2: What made you decide to go for it?
H2: That sounds like fun.

And I thought it might be fun so I tried out ... (P2)

Self-Confidence

The girls used the terms self-confidence and self-esteem interchangeably, usually to describe what the literature would call self-efficacy, that is their perceptions of their ability to perform a specific behaviour in a specific context. Two girls also spoke more generally about self-confidence. They explained that being shy could influence one's physical activity decisions by making one less likely to try, especially without a friend.

As is evident in the following comments, self-confidence and physical potential often influenced each other during the consideration period.

> ... if you really have a low self-esteem, I don't think you would consider joining really. Like you'd always be like `Oh, what would the other people think?' `How would I do?' `I don't think I'd be very good at it.' Um, `I can't do that and that'... if you um, had a moderate amount of self-esteem, I mean you'd still care what people thought but you, you would like do it anyway. (Cfg)

> Um when I started soccer last year, this was my first time, and I didn't really know, really much about it. And I was kinda scared what the others would think, ... if the others knew, all knew how to play ... but then I found out that I knew basically, you know. And I found that it was more fun to have more s-, um, um, to know that you can do it and you can do well in it instead of not knowing how to do it. And, so I think that's very important, to have self-esteem about yourself. (Efg)

> Well, actually I wasn't too worried because I'm, I'm good (MC2: Mhm.) at like all this physical activity stuff. ... I had a co-ed class in grade seven, yeah. And like mostly, I was like better than the guys ... so they respected me that way. But I know a lot of girls, they were afraid to do things like practice high jump or something, or run 'cause they were afraid of what the guys would think. Or what they looked like while they were doing it or what if they didn't do it right or something. (C2)

> Because if someone is self conscious, or like has a low self-esteem, they're less likely to go out and try anything ... especially in a group (D2).

> ... In my gym class there's a girl who wasn't a very good athlete, (MD2: Mhm.) and she just, she wouldn't try anything. ... 'Cause she didn't think she could do it (MD2: Uh huh.) and like the thing is she was afraid people would laugh at her or whatever but like, nobody would have. (D2)

> ... Well if you don't think you can do something, or you're worried about being left out and you don't have um very good self-confidence ... you usually won't do it. (P2)

Experience

Experience referred to girls' previous experiences with physical activity both in terms of what they had been exposed to or tried and what those experiences were like for them (was it something they enjoyed, something they would like to do again?). Experience and exposure gave awareness of opportunities, gave opportunities to develop skills, and affected what the girls liked by shaping their preferences. For instance, G explained why she liked outdoor activities:

> ... I love being in nature because I grew up, kind of like in the middle of nowhere. (G2)

Similarly, E felt she liked swimming because:

> I think it was because I was born in Victoria and I got to go to the beach every day so I got exposed to this. (E2)

D offered this explanation for why some of her classmates thought that sports were not cool:

> I think maybe by not starting sports ... or else maybe not being good at sports. (D1)

She also mentioned bad experiences:

> So she has the capability to be an athlete but her first coach ... always put her down ... so she just never wanted to play sports again. ... [Or] if someone lost really bad then they wouldn't want [to continue]. (D1)

P commented that previous experience not only enabled one to develop skills in the activity but also to develop decision making skills.

> ... you have to've already had been taking a lot of extracurricular activities to, to make a decision like that (MP2: Mm.) of your own. (P2)

Physical Potential

For the decision to try, physical potential was made up of a girl's beliefs about whether or not she thought she could physically meet the demands of the tasks involved. Physical potential included both her assessment of her skill level and of her body's capabilities. During the consideration period, a girl's beliefs about her physical potential were influenced by her previous experiences and exposure to different activities. The girls spoke of their bodies as a limit to physical potential in deciding to try an activity.

> Yeah, some of the activities I couldn't join just because of my body. ... I tried gymnastics but um, I, I wasn't at the same level and I found that I couldn't do the things that the other um, girls [could do] ... I was a failure so I just stopped doing gymnastics because I felt my body wasn't fit enough to be in the class and I was afraid what the other people would think. (Efg)

> Cfg: ... like if you're really short in basketball or something like maybe that-
> Efg: changes what you think.
> Cfg: Yeah, or if you're really tall in gymnastics 'cause gymnasts are like four feet tall (E laughs). ... that would discourage you ...
> Efg: Make you think different about it.
> Cfg: Yeah if you really didn't have the- potential maybe? Like just as the regular potential.

The distinction between physical potential and self-confidence is that physical potential refers to a girl's assessment of her physical ability whereas self-confidence refers to her feelings about her abilities.

The Decision to Commit

Each factor that influences the decision to try continues to influence the decision to commit although the girl may have more information about the factors at the time she makes a decision about committing (e.g., Enjoyment 2, Potential 2, Self-Confidence 2). In addition to these factors, leader, match, and feeling successful were essential factors in making the decision to commit or not to commit to a free time physical activity. Modifying factors for decisions regarding committing were doing well and growth and improvement.

Leaders

Leaders, including teachers and coaches, are a major part of physical activity experiences and thus have an important influence on girls' decisions regarding commitment to free time physical activities. Coaches may influence girls' decisions regarding trying an activity if the girls know them but they more commonly affect commitment decisions.

The essence of what the girls wanted in a good leader can be summed up in three words: "a good friend". Many of the other characteristics of a good leader are qualities one would expect in a friend. A good leader: was encouraging and supportive even if the girls performed poorly or made a mistake; encouraged input from the class/team and listened to and acted upon it; was fun to be with; and helped technically. It is interesting to note that the "technical" aspects of coaching and teaching (i.e., helping improve sport skills) were regarded by the girls as very much secondary to being a good friend and treating them with respect. The girls wanted to be valued and respected as people first. In the girls' own words:

> And I have a really good coach. (MC1: Mm hmm.) Like he's really helpful when you're racing and stuff. He's like a great friend as well. (C1)
>
> I'm really good friends with my jazz teacher and a lot of the people who are in my class so I like it. (P1)
>
> Well, I think that he's really supportive... And, um, he encourages you lots but like if you don't do well, he still says you know `this is what you're doing wrong and this is how you fix it. We'll work on it.' He's still supports you a lot. (C1)

> Like coaches play a big part. 'Cause like they offer a lot of support ... coaches are a BIG thing ... in how you feel about a sport. (D1)

> ... A good teacher listens to the students. ... Like if a student really doesn't want to do something or ... has something, an input to say ... I think it's important for them to recognize that instead of saying, \`no, I'm not going to let you say that. This is what we're going to do and we're going to do it my way'. (MP2: Mm hmm.) I like it when they ... let the students have a choice. (P2)

> ... He helps us to be a better team and do our ... positions more, um, well than we used to. (E1)

> ... It's important how the coach is like fun to be with ... it has to be someone that you like, it has to be someone ... that you want to spend time with but also someone that ... you'd listen to and respect ... someone that that's like responsible and that is like caring and fun and it has to be someone that would also be a good team player. ... But at the same time you need someone with experience. Like if your coach doesn't have experience then you know you'll miss, you know, you don't have the coaching bit. (D1)

> But the leader it's, I think it's really important that they make a good impression ... especially being around a friend rather than like a mother or father type. (Mfg: Mhm.) And so, yeah, more treating you as an equal and as actually a person. Which is unusual (laughs) 'cause lots of people don't treat teenagers like an actual person. So I think that's really important. (Cfg)

Even H, who had not had good experiences with leaders, wanted the same things.

> MH2: If you wanted to tell people how to be a good swim teacher or dance teacher, what would a good teacher or coach or whatever do?
> H2: Be patient. (MH2: Mm hmm.) Um, open for suggestions. ... That's about it.

Many girls quit or did not commit to an activity because of a bad leader. A bad leader: made girls feel bad; "just said \`do this', \`do that'"; pushed too hard, expected too much, and increased the difficulty of tasks too quickly; didn't know how to teach; or was not respectable. In the girls' own words:

> MA1: What was the difference between the nice teacher and the ones who weren't nice?
> A1: Um, she was funner, ... she was encouraging and the other ones just kinda `do this' and `do that' ...
>
> I went in dance (MH1: Did ya?) and the teacher she was, I didn't mind her. She talked through everything, it's just that when you screwed up she'd scream at you (MH1: Ohh). I didn't like that so I dropped out. (H1)
>
> Well he treated us like we were stupid and we didn't know anything. (MH2: Hmm.) Like, `alright I'm better than you, everybody knows it' (MH2: Mmm.) `just listen'. (H2)
>
> He was really, he really pushed her ... if she didn't win a race, then he would make her feel really badly. (C1)
>
> And it's kind of hard like if you lose an important match or something then some coaches ... get down on you. ... A coach won't come up to you and say `you messed up big time', but like, they'll, they might just walk away (MD2: Mm.) and not talk to you ... (D2)
>
> If you're just beginning something [a physical activity] ... and you get a bad leader or coach or teacher or something, then you get a really bad impression of it, I think. (Mfg: Mhm.) And so then you don't really want to do it. (Cfg)

Leaders had a big influence on how the girls felt about the sport or physical activity. Once again the girls experienced this influence as affecting their enjoyment of the activity. Leaders also influenced participation by encouraging involvement in the sport or activity they led and by suggesting other activities the girls could or should try.

Match

For a girl to make a decision to commit to a sport or physical activity, there must be a match between her skill level, preferences and goals, and the attributes and objectives of the particular program or class. The factor "match" was made up of many components (see Figure 3).

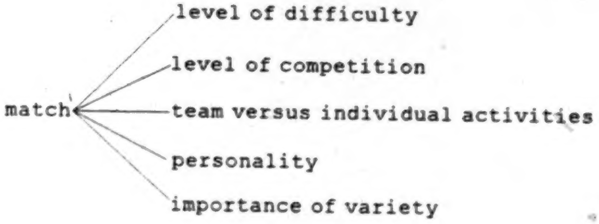
match
level of difficulty
level of competition
team versus individual activities
personality
importance of variety

Figure 3
Components of Match

The girls assessed their match with an activity based on the following components: level of difficulty, level of competition, team versus individual activities, personality and the importance of variety. Preferences with regard to each of these components varied widely between informants. The important thing for commitment to an activity was that the girls were able to find a program that matched their individual preferences, goals and needs. When a match was present, girls enjoyed the activities more and evaluated their potential more positively. The influence of match on potential is discussed in greater detail in the "Potential 2" section (p. 146).

Level of Difficulty

Level of difficulty was important to girls' decision making in two ways. First, because girls had different skill levels and experiences and they all liked to feel competent, it was important that they were able to find activities that matched their skill level. Second, the girls differed in the level of difficulty they wanted in their activities. Some liked to be challenged. Some preferred certain activities because they were easy and they did not have to try hard. Sometimes the same individual had different preferences for different activities. Level of difficulty and level of competition were the two areas with greatest variation amongst the girls.

Level of Competition

The girls varied in the level of competition they preferred. Amber summed it up:

> Yeah, but the people that are more competitive they can go on the rep teams for soccer ... just go for what you like I guess. (A2)

Competitive is better.

Some felt competitive activities were better because all of the other participants wanted to be there, because competitiveness helped in training, and because activities were more fun when there was competition.

> Like, um, see, in skiing I'm in more of a competitive group. (MC1: Mm hmm.) Rather than a just-for-fun group. And so we're all serious about it and so we all wanna be there. (C1)

> I think that's one of the main reasons why ... I really like cross-country skiing. (MC1: Mm hmm.) Is because in my group there's like one of my main competitors ... and we race against each other all the time, even when we're training (MC1: Mm hmm.) we're always pushing each other. And I think that's really good 'cause then you just keep on getting better and better. (C1)

> Like, competition is good because without competition it wouldn't, it wouldn't be as fun, 'cause you know it has to be somewhat serious. (D1)

> Because there's no point in playing a game, ... you can play a game for fun, (MD1: Mm hmm.) and it's just fun but for it to be a sport ... it's not fair if there's no competition to it. (D1)

> ... It was really lame because we only played other teams from our school. ... It wasn't very good 'cause there wasn't the competition. ... It was one of the key things that was just kind of missing. (D1)

> But I like the competition (ME2: Mhm.) against the other team. (E2)

> So I really like competing in cheerleading. (P2)

> MP2: Is there anything that you'd change about any of those to make them better?
> P2: ... Well sometimes in jazz ... I like the school and I like the teacher but sometimes I wish we would compete.

Non-competitive is better.

Others felt activities were more fun if they were not competitive.

> I think it was more fun, like some of the other teams, they, they, it was just go, go and it's not for fun, but our team, we lost almost every game (MA1 laughs) and so ... after that it was just fun ... (A1)

> MB1: Are there, um, any things that you would change about ringette to make it better?
> B1: Well, maybe not having so many big, big tournaments. Like just having fun tournaments ... Provincials kind of get a little out of hand because ... everybody's upset if they lose and happy if they win ... and plus in the lower levels, like in Bunnies, that's grade 1, like the ages 6-7, um, they have big tournaments. (MB1: Oh, do they?) And it's kind of carried away 'cause they're just in it for the fun ... not for the competition.

> I thought it was fun because it wasn't competitive, it was just lessons on how to synchronize swim. And it didn't matter if you like didn't pass one of the little tests because you could always go back and do it again. (B1)

> ... At our dance school it's not really ... competitive ... that's why I like dancing at this school ... (F2)

> ... Like if you go to [another dance school] and they think you have um, the potential to be um, a professional dancer then you put, they put you in classes everyday. (MF2: Mmm.) And um, like six days a week for like four or five hours after school and they put you in like competition after competition after competition and by the time you get to my age ... they're burnt out ... they don't want to do it anymore. ... So then they quit. (F2)

Related to level of difficulty and competitiveness was the preferred level of structure (with structure usually increasing with level of difficulty and competition). Some girls preferred much more structured activities than others. G preferred the least structured activities such as skiing with friends and camping and shunned structured adult-organized activities because:

> I don't really like being, having anybody like controlling me 'cause it reminds me a lot of school. (G2)

What she enjoyed about her involvement was also different from what those who preferred structured activities enjoyed.

MG1: ... What do you like about it [recreational downhill skiing]?
G1: ... It's such a great feeling.

MG2: ... You said in the other one that you liked skiing 'cause it just gives you a great feeling, can you describe that feeling? ...
G2: Mmm, kind of like a release of tenseness and it's just a whole other beauty ... it's getting away and you're in the wilderness skiing in the mountains. And I love the mountains (MG2: Mmm.) And I love being away from the city. ... Sometimes I just need a break.

Team Versus Individual Activities

Girls differed in their preferences for team versus individual activities. Everyone agreed that in a team if one person messes up it is everyone's problem whereas in an individual activity each person only has to worry about herself. However the girls differed in how this made them feel. Some felt this created a "we're all in it together" attitude and a bond among team members and thus they were closer to others in their team activities than in their individual activities. In contrast, other girls felt that sharing problems was a source of division and felt closer to teammates or classmates in individual sports or physical activities. These girls felt that problems occurred in a team because not everyone made the same effort, and because sometimes team members did not fit in.

Team better.

Soccer teams:

... It's fun to be with my friends and um, be on a team. (E1)

> I like the team a lot. That's like probably the thing that seems most important 'cause like on a team you get, you get the feeling of, well like, not so much acceptance, but mostly belonging. ... You don't have to try to fit in on a team ... you're part of the team. (D1)

> Um, it's more of a team effort. ... You need all, like six players to win the game not just one person (MF2: Mhm.) can win it. Whereas in dance ... you're performing for yourself and the audience in most cases ... you're there for yourself, you're not there for anybody else ... you do have to work together it's just, it's not the same team effort as it is in soccer ... (F2)

> P made the following comment about dancing:

> ... It's a class, it's not a team, so (MP1: Mm hmm.) you don't really have to be there for one person ... dance it's together but it's an individual thing. Like if you're doing a group dance it's, you're doing the motions together but it's individual so it's like `I'll just do what I do and if someone misses, messes up that's their problem' (MP1: Mmm.) but in cheerleading you really have to be there for everyone because if someone messes up that's everyone's problem. (P1)

P also said that in a team:

> ... you're more friends than just a class. (P1)

> Individual better.

> Like, um X, one of the girls, um, she was upset because ... this was her first time playing. (MB1: Mm hmm.) And, um, well everybody was picking on her because they thought that if she would've done better then we would've done better and that kind of stuff but it wasn't her fault. (B1)

> ... For wrestling you're out there and it's all you ... no one else can help you out. (MD2: Mhm.) So they want you to do well, they want you to be successful. ... They're rooting for you I guess. (MD2: Mhm.) But, with soccer it's a team thing and so if someone does something you might be `Why did you get that ball? That was my ball' ... because there's more than one person just like playing it, then there's gonna be a bit of conflict. (D2)

> ... There's always people on the soccer team who just don't quite fit in ... there's always someone who is, uh, ignored. ... So people don't really get along on the soccer team, whereas on my ski team, we're always really close. (C1)
>
> ... There are some people that for one reason or another just don't quite fit in [on a team]. (D1)
>
> Like there are people who are good soccer players and they want to be there but they're really obnoxious. (MC2: Mmm.) And they don't respect anyone. ... And then there's people who, who try really hard but they're not quite as good ... but they ... have a really good attitude. ... But the obnoxious people just don't let them get away with anything. ... So, yeah, it really doesn't work. (C2)

Whether they preferred team or individual activities, a number of girls spoke of preferring to do activities with a group of people rather than by themselves.

Personality

How junior high girls make decisions and what they do in their free time "just depends on who you are" (D1). This was a common response. The informants did not experience a process or a strategy of decision making and they seemed to see each person or group as unique. Therefore they did not seek to understand how "different" others came to decisions because they did not perceive this as relevant to them. They said the following about how junior high girls make decisions:

> Well, it's different for a whole bunch of people. (H2)
>
> Depends on the girls. (D1)
>
> ... Just depends on who you are. (D1)

> ... It really depends um what their interests are ... and what their likes and dislikes are ... it really depends what kind of person they are ... the personalities of other people. (E1)

One girl quit an activity because:

> I just decided that it kinda wasn't me. (A1)

The girls said they did not like certain activities because:

> ... It's not really my thing. (D1)

> I really just dislike it. ... It's just not my kind of sport. (E1)

E and H explained different levels of involvement:

> Mmmm, different personalities, like what they like to do best, and some of them are too busy to do different. (E2)

> Some people are just more anxious than others, some people just sit around (MH2: Mm hmm.) like me, and then there's other people ... that can never ever sit down, they have to be doing something. (H2)

Personality also included statements such as:

> I just recently figured out that I'm pretty competitive (laughs). (C1)

> I'm an athletic kind of person. I really like sports ... (D1)

C and D explained how their personalities affected their choice of activities:

> I'm not a very violent sort of person but I think that if I was I might want to play hockey ... and if I was lazy, then I would want to do bi-athalon. ... Yeah I think it does have an affect. It is a factor of what, what you do and how you think. (C2)

> ... Your personality affects everything, ... your look on things and everything ... (D2)

The girls I interviewed seemed to believe that personality determined their likes and dislikes, as if this were stable and not something that they could choose or change. Although some mentioned previous experiences, they seemed to see personality as dominant- either one liked an activity or one did not and that was just how it was or how she was. This raises interesting questions about programming for girls who consider themselves to be unathletic as a personality trait. Some of the informants did realize, however, that their feelings toward an activity had changed (i.e., they did not like an activity at first and later they did), so a stable personality was not the only determinant of what kinds of physical activities they liked.

Importance of Variety

From choosing different positions each time in intramurals (E1), to having different dance teachers (F1), to being well-rounded and choosing to do a number of activities rather than "specializing" (D1), the girls liked variety in their free time physical activities. Importance of Variety refers to the preference for and priority placed upon trying new or different activities versus devoting one's time and energy toward activities in which participation is established. Different informants evaluated this differently.

This factor is included as part of match because it was important that the girls' priority for each activity matched the level of commitment required by it and the goals of the physical activity program. For instance, an activity which demanded that participants put it first would be a bad match for girls who placed high value on variety. Similarly, it was important that opportunities for participation at different skill levels were available, as the girls who were devoting the majority of their time and energy to one activity would progress to a much higher level in that activity than girls who tried as many activities as possible and did not limit themselves to one activity. Generally, this is how this factor varied between the girls. The girls involved at more advanced levels placed their priority on activities which they had committed to previously and the girls who valued variety and balance were involved in less demanding programs which allowed them to continue to try new activities and to participate in a number of activities.

For some, this was a matter or priority or personal evaluation of importance. They had the opportunity to be involved at higher levels but deliberately chose not to limit themselves. For others, this was related to potential. For instance, if the girls believed they had the potential to advance in a certain activity, they were willing to put more time and energy into that activity and give it higher priority. Some girls may not have had the skills to be involved at higher levels even if they wanted to.

Some girls decided to try and to commit to new activities because they were different from the ones they were already involved with. Some girls valued variety and balance and some were encouraged by their parents to do so:

> ... Like my mom, wanted me to do, I had to have two sports and an art. (D1)
>
> And my mom got me into it. She said I had to do one sport thing and one artsy thing. (C1)
>
> [referring to mom talking] Or `Oh neat.' and `Do you want to go to this?' ... `you have to try everything'. (B1)
>
> No, she [mom] just wants me to try different things. (E1)

D and B put variety first:

> 'Cause I have no idea what I want to do for sure. (MD1: Mm hmm.) It's like `what do you want to do when you grow up?' `No clue.' (laughs) (M laughs) So, I just like to try a lot of things. (D1)
>
> [in her ideal program] ... You'd have to do everything at least once. (MB1: Mm hmm.) So that you could get a variety. (B1)
>
> ... I had too many things going. (MD1: Mmm.) So I had to make a sacrifice 'cause I tried out for a play last year, (MD1: Mm hmm.) and I made it but I picked basketball over the play. (MD1: Mmm.) And this year the same thing happened, so I picked the play over basketball. (MD1: Mmm.) Just to even it out a bit. (D1)

C and F gave priority to established activities:

> MC1: So are, are you happy though, doing all this skiing and giving up other things to do that?
> C1: Yeah. Yes. I really like skiing. It pays off too.
>
> ... I have to schedule around my dance and, and school a lot. ... It gets quite frustrating but I guess, I guess I don't mind if I've been doing it all these years (laughs). (F1)
>
> So, basically if it's in the summer then soccer is kind of my first priority but if it's in the winter, anywhere from November to April ... it's skiing. (C2)

> F1: So about, about 20-30 hours a week I dance.
> MF1: So it does take up a lot of your time.
> F1: A lot, yes, a lot (giggle).
> MF1: ... Do you feel like comfortable with your decision to spend (F1: Mm hmm.) that time? (F1: Yeah.) How do ya know that it's a good-
> F1: A good thing to do? ... Um, probably 'cause ... I enjoy it so much. ... It's pretty much become a part of my everyday life. (MF1: Mm hmm.) More than, as in activity or a um, or a sport or anything else it's just a part of my life and that I really enjoy.

> ... I have, um, exams, ballet exams that I have to concentrate on (MF1: Mm hmm.) And I think they're more important, they're more a priority of mine to do well on. ... 'Cause I've always gotten Highly Commended or Honours on my exams and it's, I don't want to get any lower than that. (F1)

> But track, it not one of my main things (MC2: Mhm.) it's just kind of fun. (MC2: Mhm.) And so, yeah, it would be one of the first to drop I guess. (C2)

As an example of the way in which the importance placed on variety is related to competitiveness, this is a conversation with C, who is highly competitively involved, and E, who has just completed her first season of recreational participation in a team sport:

> Efg: ... If you're in an activity ... you would like to join another one, maybe that's because you want to find out what else you're good at. ... I think that it's important to try new things. Um, especially the ones that you haven't tried before. ...
> Mfg: So is that sort of the opposite then of, of keeping doing what you're already good at?
> Efg: Yeah.
> Cfg: Well you can try things, different things. Like if you find you're good at ball sports but you really like soccer, then, I mean, you can still, you can try others like volleyball and ping pong-
> Efg: But you can still stick with soccer.
> Cfg: Yeah. (Mfg: Mm.) And make that like your first priority ...

Feeling Successful

The girls evaluated feeling successful positively if they felt that they were meeting their own goals in the activity. Feeling successful was very much self-defined because, as discussed in match, the girls had very different reasons for participation, and different expectations of what they wanted to get out of the activity. For instance, some girls achieved a feeling of success by fulfilling their goal of having fun and trying their best. Thus, they continued to participate in the activity although they were not achieving greatly by external standards (scoring, progressing quickly). However, if a girl's main goal was to spend time with her friends and her friends withdrew she might also quit even though she was performing well.

The girls' evaluations of their feelings of success then influenced their experience of enjoyment (Enjoyment 2) in the activity and their evaluations of their potential (Potential 2) for future success in the physical activity. Feeling successful was often influenced by evaluations of doing well and growth and improvement, both of which were also self-defined. The strength and indeed presence of these influences (doing well and growth and improvement) were determined by the girls' goals, with those striving to perform well or master sport or physical activity being more influenced by evaluations of doing well and growth and improvement.

Doing Well

Doing well referred to the girls' feelings of performing successfully in the activity. While this was self-defined in the sense that different girls had different standards for evaluating doing well (i.e., for one girl it was winning the race, for another it was being able to play a new position), it always referred to skills related to performing well (physical or technical skills) as opposed to doing a good job of making friends.

The girls liked to participate in physical activities in which they felt they did well. Initial success was especially important and affected decisions about committing.

> ... It helps whether you, when you start out at something whether you're moderately good at it. (C1)
>
> ... It's hard but I was pretty good at it (MP2: Mm hmm.) on the first try ... so I really liked to continue and, and see what else I could do. (P2)
>
> So like, I was really successful the first year and that was really good, it kept me going. (D1)
>
> I think also if you're good at the sport, then it encourages you, sort of, mentally. (C1)
>
> Well I'm usually just in it with fun ... and I've never really been on a team for soccer so I was kind of nervous at the start (ME2: Mhm.) but then I got the hang of it and it was fun. (E2)
>
> Like you're not very good at sports and ... people tell you you're not very good (MH2: Mm hmm.) you kind of don't want to go back. (H2)

Doing well encouraged the girls to commit to an activity while not doing well was a reason for not committing. For less competitive people this was mainly because not doing well in the activity made it not fun and they quit because they didn't like it. These two pairs of quotes from E and H illustrate how each was influenced differently by her perceptions of how well she did in different activities.

E:

> ... With the sprint I like just running and being ahead. (E1)
>
> ... With figure skating, uh, we had to do jumps and stuff and I didn't like it much 'cause I kept on falling ... (E2)

H:

> H1: I don't mind the throwing events it's just running I hate.
> MH1: Mm hmm. Can you pinpoint what it is that you hate about it?
> H1: ... I'm just not very good at it.
>
> MH1: A best experience with physical activity?
> H1: Javelin ... I'm one of the best throwers in the Phys. Ed. class (MH1: Mhm. Neat.) So I did pretty good on track and field day yesterday.

In more competitive people or those involved at higher levels, not doing well also influenced their assessment of their potential for future success (i.e., being competitive, winning). If they were doing well, they knew they could advance, so they continued to participate. This is discussed further in the potential 2 section.

> ... [Her hip] wasn't feeling so great so I had to quit (MF2: Mhm.) 'cause I wouldn't, I wouldn't do very well. (F2)
>
> And I knew I could do it and I was pretty good. And I thought it was a lot of fun so I just kept doing it ... (P2)

The girls, particularly those who participated at the highest levels, felt that doing well made all the hard work worthwhile.

> ... I'm really competitive so I think if I was having fun I would probably be doing pretty well as well. (C2)

> ... You try so hard and you train and you train and you work at it and you work at it, and if it's for a show, you go out there and you do a good performance and the applause afterwards, (MF1: Mmm.) the way you feel on stage ... what the audience gives to you. ... It makes you dance, it makes you feel good. (F1)

> When you train hard for exams and stuff and you come out with a good mark ... it's all worth it in the end. (F1)

Growth and Improvement

Growth and Improvement referred to an individual girl's perception of her personal achievement in learning, improving, and progressing in her skill development or fitness without regard to "outcome". This was measuring one's competence in the sport or physical activity against one's previous level of competence. The girls were more likely to continue in a physical activity if they saw themselves continuing to improve. For the more competitive girls, this was driven by a quest for excellence, personal achievement, and working toward a goal. Regardless of competitiveness, one of the girls' reasons for deciding to continue in sports or physical activity was because they felt they were learning a lot. Many of the girls said that learning was fun.

> ... It was just fun ... learning basic skills because I hadn't played basketball ever before. (D1)

> I wasn't very good at it but I liked it so I (MC2: Mhm.) learned how to do it. I went to this special class to do it. (C2)

Improvement was also a common goal for participation.

Self-Confidence 2

As described previously (p. 120) self-confidence refers to a girl's feelings about her ability to perform a specific behaviour in a specific context. Self-confidence 2 differs from feeling successful in that feeling successful refers to a girl's assessment of meeting her own goals in the physical activity in the past, whereas self-confidence 2 refers to her feelings about her ability to perform in the physical activity in the future. However, feeling successful often influences self-confidence 2.

> Cfg: Well, if you have like a moderate amount [of self-confidence] when you go in ... then it could grow (Mfg: Oh okay.) or it could ... drop. (Mfg: Mhm.) Depending on ... how you do. ... If you don't do well ... the next time you ... consider joining something, then you may do it differently.

Self-confidence 2 influences decisions about committing by influencing potential. For instance:

> Yeah 'cause you have to be confident in yourself in order for you to um, stick with something. 'Cause if it makes you feel, `oh, well, I can't do this 'cause I'm not good' it kinda puts you down. (B3)

> Yeah maybe it ... increases your ... self-esteem. ... if you start something and you find that you are good at it then you would want to continue because you think, you know, you're good at it. Or well, you're not bad at it or something. (Cfg)

Enjoyment 2

As in decisions to try, enjoyment was very important when making a decision about whether or not to commit to an activity. The girls often continued or quit a particular physical activity based on enjoyment (i.e., liking or not liking it). While the decision regarding trying an activity was based on whether or not a girl thought she would enjoy the activity, by the time she was making a decision about whether or not to commit to an activity, she had actually experienced the activity. Thus, when evaluating Enjoyment 2 she actually knew if she had friends in the activity, if she felt successful, if there was a match between her preferences and the activity, if she liked the leader, and if she felt she had potential in the activity. She knew whether or not she was enjoying the activity.

Comments on how other factors affected enjoyment:

> Yeah, if you're just beginning something... and you get a bad leader or coach or teacher or something ... then you don't really want to do it. ... Yeah you don't enjoy it as much definitely. ... It just brings like the enjoyment out of it if you don't like whoever's coaching. (Cfg)

> ... If you've joined something and all the people are older (Mfg: Mhm.) or younger or something, and you don't have any friends or you don't have many friends, then it would definitely be under, like it would definitely affect how you liked it. (Cfg)

One exception to enjoyment being necessary for girls to decide to commit to an activity was that sometimes they participated in an activity that was not enjoyable in the moment because it was important (i.e., learning to swim so they could swim safely at the lake) or because they believed it would help them to do something they would like to do the future.

> ... There's a lot of days ... when it's cold, like this year we trained in -35. (MC1: Yeah.) I mean, you don't want to train in -35 (laugh) ... there's lots of days when you just don't want to do anything but you know, you still do it 'cause you know it will help in the future. (C1)

Enjoying or not enjoying an activity was the single largest determinant of commitment for those involved in recreational physical activities or in community league level sports (particularly those that were not concerned with safety). Those competing at an advanced level also considered their assessment of their ability to continue to achieve success in that activity.

Comments on quitting and continuing:

> Well, I was skating ... I didn't enjoy it ... there was nothing I really liked, well, I learned it and then uh, you'd have to practice it for two hours by yourself and ... I just kept looking at the time (MA2: Mmm.) seeing if it was almost over. ... I just didn't like it. (A2)

> Like with baseball I ... I didn't really enjoy it. (MF1: Mm hmm.) So I ... didn't take it anymore. (F1)

> Soccer, I'll probably stick with that if I like it this year. (A1)

> ... Soccer I'm gonna be in for a long time I think (MA2: Mhm.) 'cause I like it so much. (A2)

> ... I think I'll play ringette for a long time ... because it's just something that I like to do and it's fun to me. (B2)

> And uh, I really enjoy it, so. So I stick with it every year. (F1)

> And I thought it was a lot of fun so I just kept doing it ... (P2)

The following are some comments on the importance of enjoyment:

> That's like a major factor if you like it, I think. (Cfg)
>
> You don't like it. Why would you do it? (Cfg)
>
> Cfg: Well I think if you enjoy it, that's like definitely way up (Efg: Yeah) in like the top of the list.
> Efg: Liking it is a big factor.
>
> MA2: ... What of all those things would you say is like the most important thing in making your decision? Or are they all the same?
> A2: Um, probably which ones [activities] you enjoyed before ...

In fact, enjoyment was so essential, the major way girls determined whether or not they had made a good decision was by whether or not they liked the activity and looked forward to going to it.

<u>Potential 2</u>

When making a decision regarding committing to an activity, potential was the girl's assessment of her likelihood of continuing to improve in the activity and was influenced by her self-confidence and feelings of success in addition to an assessment of body and skill.

> And so like it sort of made me realize that like `hey there's so much further that I can get with this', ... before then I thought, you know, I was just going to go and do my best and hopefully maybe get a medal and that would just be the end. (MD1: Mm hmm.) Like I might not wrestle again. But then having like lost, like come in sixth ... like I can improve. ... I'm like, `I want to try to do better'. ... `Cause if I'd come in dead last, I might have thought `oh oh I'm not going to do this anymore'. ... But, so like six places, it's not that far away. ... So it's not unrealistic. (D1)

> MC2: ... You said that ... probably in the future you'll have to, like give up something? (C2: Mhm.) How will you make that decision?
> C2: ... I'll probably just like, look at all the stuff that I'm doing at the time and seeing what I enjoy the most and um, how I'm doing in it. ... What's more favorable to my future ... (C2)

> MF1: So did you, did you like soccer when you were doing it?
> F1: I, I liked it alot. I still wish I could play but um, I just don't have the time and ... I think I have more potential in dance than I do in soccer 'cause I'd really like to go somewhere with, in, in dance. And in soccer I, I think it'd be great to be on the, the Canadian team or whatever it is but I just, I don't think I could.

As in decisions about trying, the girls spoke of their bodies as limiting their decisions about committing:

> In the winter I'm sick a lot. ... When that happens you know I slow down a bit. ... I'm just getting like too tired, not enough sleep. And I just don't recover from all the training that we do in the winter. (C2)

> ... Probably what'll happen is I'll get really burnt out and I'll get sick a lot, which happens in the winter. ... Then, someone will have to say `[C] you'll have to drop soccer' or `you have to drop skiing' or whatever I'm doing ... (C2)

> ... My body only allows me to do so much. (MF1: Mm hmm.) Which is also part of the reason ... why I got my hip injury is 'cause I overworked myself. (F1)

> But um, in grade seven I had track but I had to quit because ... I had long distance running every day and then like I had soccer games every second day and dance like every second day too. ... And um, physically ... I just couldn't handle it ... this year I was doing track, I was doing um long jump. ... I signed up because my hip was feeling, um, better. (MF2: Mhm.) But then it wasn't feeling so great so I had to quit (MF2: Mhm.) 'cause I wouldn't, I wouldn't do very well. ... I would just injure it more and I had um, more dance exams and a big show coming up, so (MF2: Mmm.) I had to quit. (F2)

In the next chapter, the results of this study will be compared with current literature on girls' decisions regarding physical activity participation and non-participation.

CHAPTER V

INTEGRATION OF RESULTS AND LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to integrate the results of the present study describing the process by which junior high girls make decisions regarding participation and non-participation in free time physical activity with current literature on this subject. In this chapter, the terms "girls" and "young women" are used interchangeably, as they are in the literature. Commonalities and differences will be identified and possible explanations for different results will be offered. Implications for programming and future research will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Decision Making

> "...I don't know how it happens, it just does. But it's not conscious, I don't write it out or anything." (D2)

The junior high school girls interviewed in this study conceptualized decision making as a moment in time and something that "just happened". They emphasized that they did not deliberately sit down and consciously consider each factor but that they made decisions more intuitively. They also reported that all factors were evaluated simultaneously as opposed to in a linear or step-by-step fashion Schvaneveldt and Adams (1983) also found that adolescents made decisions in this way. They stated that female adolescents often used an intuitive style to make everyday decisions. In the intuitive style, "... the emphasis is on emotions, feelings, and fantasy. Information seeking and rational weighing of competing data are mostly ignored. The impending decision is based on what `feels right'" (Schvaneveldt & Adams, p. 100, citing Harren, 1976).

The literature also indicates that decision making ability improves as adolescents develop greater ability to consider goals; to generate and evaluate options; to predict outcomes of actions; to weigh the risks, costs and benefits of alternatives; and to assess the credibility of various sources of information (Baron et al, 1993; Grisso & Vierling, 1978, and Kaser-Boyd, Adelman & Taylor, 1985, cited in Ormond et al.; Lewis, 1981; Mann, Harmoni, & Power, 1989). It may be experience with making some decisions using these newly developed skills which prompted the girls to insist that they do not deliberately and consciously sit down and do this for each activity choice. Alternately, it could be that while they are still struggling to make some more novel decisions using abstract reasoning, that they are so accustomed to making free time physical activity decisions that they are able to use these skills automatically. The literature indicates that adolescents demonstrate greater ability to use formal operational thinking with familiar activities (Ambuel & Rappaport, 1992; Byrnes, 1988, Piaget, 1972, Pulos, deBenedictis, Linn, Sullivan, & Clement, 1982, and Levine & Linn, 1977, all cited in Green, Johnson, & Kaplan, 1992; Schvaneveldt &

Adams, 1983).

It was very important to the junior high school girls in the current study that they were the ones who determined whether or not they would participate. They also clearly wanted to have meaningful input into their physical activity programs and to be allowed to make choices regarding their involvement rather than only having leaders direct them to "do this" and "do that". This desire for autonomy is congruent with the self-determination aspect of cognitive evaluation theory. According to this theory, feelings of self-determination increase intrinsic motivation and thus increase the likelihood of participation in an activity (Deci & Ryan, 1992; Frederick & Ryan, 1995).

Decisions Regarding Physical Activity Participation

The informants in the present study identified time and scheduling, parents, friends, opportunity, enjoyment and self-confidence as essential factors in making the decision to try or not to try a free time physical activity. In addition to these, leader, match, potential and feeling successful were essential factors in making the decision to commit or not to commit to a free time physical activity. Modifying factors (those which were not essential but influenced decisions through their influence on essential factors) were experience and potential for decisions regarding trying, and doing well and growth and improvement for decisions regarding committing. Current literature related to these factors is examined.

Time and Scheduling

In the present study, lack of time was the most common reason for girls deciding not to participate in free time physical activity. Two other recent studies confirm this finding. Jackson and Rucks (1995) found other commitments and lack of time were the constraints to participation in leisure-time physical activity most frequently reported by adolescents. Henderson et al. (1988) found that American women identified lack of time as their greatest barrier to recreation.

In the literature, lack of time was commonly cited by teenage girls as a reason why they were not involved in physical activity (Browne, 1992; Canada Fitness Survey, 1983; Jackson & Rucks, 1995; Raithel, 1988). Problems with scheduling physical activity were also cited by adolescent females (Hultsman, 1993b; Jackson & Rucks, 1995).

In the literature, a number of different conditions were suggested as contributing to girls' perceptions of lack of time for physical activity. These included lack of importance of physical activity and changes in other areas of life which leave less time for physical activity. Some researchers suggested that girls' perceptions of lack of time for physical activity result from a societal view which does not place importance upon physical activity for teenage girls (Eccles & Harold, 1991; Lewko & Greendorfer, 1988;

McCabe et al., 1991). Researchers proposed that as a result of this, girls did not identify physical activity as important for themselves (Chase & Dummer, 1992; Coakley & White, 1992; Reimer & Feltz, 1995) and did not spend time on activities they identified as unimportant (Fox, 1991). However, the girls in the current study did not feel that their decisions about physical activity participation were determined by societal views.

It has also been suggested that adolescents may have increasing responsibilities with school, work and family which leave them less time for recreation (Coakley & White, 1992; Feigley, 1987, cited in Lindner, 1991). The informants in the current study also felt that school work took up a lot of their time outside of school. While the young women in Coakley and White's study reported that their parents had expectations that their daughters would not allow leisure to interfere with the daughters' family responsibilities such as cooking and cleaning, the girls in the current study did not experience this. The only family responsibility that they reported interfering with their free time activities was babysitting. Even in these cases, the girls did not feel that this interfered with their participation in structured physical activity programs. The informants did not feel that they were expected to give up activities they were interested in to babysit but they did say babysitting sometimes reduced their spontaneity because they had to plan and schedule their activities with their families.

There are a number of possible explanations for the differences in responses between the young women in Coakley and White's (1992) study and those in the present study. First, the young women in the two studies lived in very different environments. Data for Coakley and White's study were collected in 1985 and the young people were living in an industrial area southeast of London, England. Second, Coakley and White's subjects had a much broader age range than the present study (13-23 years versus 12-15 years). Perhaps it was more the older girls who reported feeling they were expected to give up leisure activities to attend to family responsibilities.

Influence of Significant Others

Much research has highlighted the influence of significant others' approval or acceptance on adolescents' decision making (Coakley & White, 1992; Godin, 1993; Grimes & Swisher, 1989, cited in Pfeffer, 1993; Hultsman, 1993a; Hultsman, 1993b; Jackson & Rucks, 1995; Langer & Warheit, 1992; Maddux, 1993; Schvaneveldt & Adams, 1983). These significant others include peers, friends, siblings, parents, and leaders. It has been suggested that during adolescence, young women are especially sensitive to the opinions of others concerning the appropriateness of certain activities (McCabe et al., 1991). Thus, for girls to become active participants in sport and physical activity, they need a number of significant others to act as sources of support (Anderssen & Wold, 1992; Brown et al., 1989; Browne, 1992; Lewko & Greendorfer, 1988). Parents' and friends' encouragement to participate in physical activity and support for physical activity involvement increased girls' free time physical activity participation (Anderssen & Wold; Brown et al.). Active parents and friends also had a positive influence on adolescents' free time physical activity levels (Anderssen & Wold).

Although activity levels of parents were not considered in the current study, Brown et al.'s (1989) and Anderssen and Wold's (1992) other findings were confirmed by the girls in the current study. The informants reported that friends who also participated in sport or physical activity encouraged their participation, as did their parents. In agreement with these studies, the informants did not feel that friends replaced parents as the major influence in their decisions. They felt that although friends became very important during the junior high years, parents also remained very important. Coakley and White (1992) found that parents were the most important source of encouragement and support for those aged 13-16.

Further, although the girls in this study did not specifically mention physical activity level of friends as an influence, they did say that one of the best things about their free time was spending time with friends; that friends made the activity fun; and that enjoying being with friends was one of the things that made them decide to commit to activities. They also said that when they were with their friends, they made decisions about what to do by consensus. From these comments, it seems likely that the physical activity level of their friends did play a significant role in these junior high girls' decisions regarding trying and committing to free time physical activities. As B said:

> Depends on their friends. ... Because if you have lazy friends, like you're going to be lazy if you're with them ... (B1)

Friends were a factor in the decision to try in the present study, but because the girls only had to believe that they could make a friend in the activity, this factor was not often cited as the reason why they decided not to try an activity. In contrast, Jackson and Rucks (1993) found that not having a leisure partner was more commonly described as a significant barrier to initiating leisure activity participation than to continuing. Perhaps this difference was due to the nature of the activities in the two studies. The girls in the present study talked mostly about structured physical activities where one could go alone and a leisure partner was built-in. Of the leisure activities identified by Edmonton junior and senior high school students in the Jackson and Rucks' study, 44% were "competitive sport activities", 29% were "non-competitive physical health and exercise activities" and 27% were "other" activities (Jackson & Rucks, 1995). A number of the non-competitive (e.g., downhill skiing, running, working out, swimming not in a program) and other (e.g., socializing, partying) activities were not structured. Thus, if one did not have a leisure partner they would have to participate alone.

Finally, Haywood (1993) asserted that peer groups had a significant influence on participation in physical activity programs and that if physical activity was not acceptable within an individual's peer group, the child would not be inclined to join. In contrast, the girls in the present study were quite adamant that they would not allow peers or friends to stop them from doing something they wanted to do.

> In a way I get some pressure like that from my friends but I just say `I wanna do it. If you don't wanna do it it's fine, (MB2: Mhm.) but it's my choice and you don't have to come in with me. (B2)

> ... Some people in my school like they take a lot of things just 'cause their friends are doing them. ... Like I don't do it because my friends are doing it and I think if you're really serious about something ... then, um, what other people say or whatever doesn't really matter to you or, you know, influence you like in a bad way. (F1)

Parents, however, were another matter, as their placement in the model (Figure 2, p. 107) between opportunity and the decision to try indicates. Parents mediated the girls' ability to take advantage of an opportunity to try an activity. Hultsman (1993a) found that more early adolescents reported parents as influential in their decision not to initiate participation in an activity that interested them than identified peers or leaders. The informants in the current study expressed views consistent with this. Even when a girl was aware of an opportunity, if her parents forbade or strongly discouraged her participation, then the opportunity was not available to her. Parents' approval, or at least lack of disapproval was necessary for the girls in the current study to proceed with decision making.

Although the influence of different significant others was not directly compared in this study, the girls seemed to confirm these findings as well. While ongoing parental support was necessary for continued participation, parents' strongest influence was in giving permission to try the activity in the first place. None of the girls spoke of their parents revoking permission once it had been granted. Also, while the hope of making friends was enough for a girl to make a decision to try an activity, she would not commit to an activity unless she actually had a friend in it. This would seem to make peers (i.e., lack of friends in the activity) a stronger determinant for not continuing than not starting. These findings highlight the importance of support.

Friends' Influence

In addition to the influences mentioned above, the girls in the current study identified two ways in which friends influenced decision making about free time physical activities. First, friends were a common source of information about opportunities for free time physical activity involvement.

Second, sometimes the girls moved directly to the trial period without making a decision to try the activity. Some girls went to activities that they would not go to otherwise because a friend wanted someone to go with. In these cases, the girls made more of a decision to support a friend than to try an activity, but after trying the activity they did make the decision about whether or not to commit. This is similar to a study of women in which Henderson & Bialeschki (1993) found that in some situations, such as when friends were engaged in an activity and they wanted to be with their friends, women participated in activities that they did not prefer and that women learned about their preferences through participating.

In Coakley and White's (1992) study, young women often reported giving up their own sport and leisure interests when they got involved with a boyfriend. The informants in this study did not experience that. There are likely a number of reasons for this. First, there were environmental and population differences between the two studies (described on p. 154). Second, only one girl in the current study had a boyfriend and she did not participate regularly in any free time physical activities either before or after meeting him. In fact, contrary to popular belief, the junior high girls in this study reported that boys were really not a factor in their decisions about what to do in their free time.

> Well there are a lot of girls who all they do is think about boys and ... everything they do ... has something to do with some guy. But, like I know when I do things ... that has nothing to do with boys 'cause there aren't any boys there. (Mfg: Mm.) Yeah, I don't really base my opinion on boys ... (Cfg)

> Um, to me boys aren't really that important ... there's other things to do other than boys, like most soccer there's a girls' team and a boys' team, so they're not mixed ... if they're not there you don't think about them that much. (Efg)

In fact, the only time when they differentiated between their friends who were male and their friends who were female was when I specifically asked.

> Cfg: I think of all like my guy friends, as being, well not girls, but they're just part of a gang, kinda. (Mfg: Yeah.) And I don't really think of them differently.
> Efg: ... It's kinda different you know, just to have a friend or more than a friend. ... It depends what they are to you, I guess.
> Cfg: Yeah. Like the level of friendship that you have (Efg: Yeah.) I guess. ...
> Mfg: So like maybe the guys who are just friends or just one of the gang are, have an influence that's similar to your friends but if you've got ...
> Cfg: ... a special guy in your life, yes ...
> Mfg: They have a different ...
> Efg: effect on you.
> Cfg: Yeah but also if you have like a really, really, really best friend that's a girl, (Mfg: Mm.) I think they could have just about the same influence.

Parents' Influence

In addition to the influences mentioned previously (p. 154 & 157), the girls in the current study reported that parents influenced their decision making regarding free time physical activities by affecting their opportunities to participate and sometimes by deciding for them. Parents affected girls' opportunities in two ways. First, girls often found out about physical activity opportunities from their parents. Second, parents set the boundaries of the girls' choices because parents' permission was required for participation. In these ways, the parents "screened" their daughters' opportunities. Previous research also found that parents often determined the boundaries which limited the choices available to adolescents and thus influenced initiating participation (Butcher, 1983; Dahlgren, 1988; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Howard & Madrigal, 1990, cited in Hultsman, 1993a; Sopinka, 1984).

Additionally, Coakley and White (1992) found that parents influenced opportunities for participation because they often supplied the money and transportation necessary for their children to participate. This was also true for girls in the current study. However, unlike the adolescents in previous research (Coakley & White, 1992; Hultsman, 1993b; Jackson & Rucks, 1993) the girls in the current study did not identify lack of transportation and cost of the activity as reasons for deciding not to try or not to commit to an activity. Two girls mentioned that money was a concern but so far this had not stopped them from participating in any activities. Although most of the girls' activities were not within walking distance, only one girl mentioned transportation as a concern and again this had not stopped her from participating. Perhaps this was because the girls all came from middle class families. Parents often drove their daughters to activities. As well, the city in which the current study was conducted is much smaller in comparison to the Pheonix metropolitan area (Hultsman) and an industrial area outside of London, England (Coakley & White). Also, as a group, the girls in this study were younger than the subjects in Jackson and Rucks' and Coakley and White's study. Although they were still relying on parents for help, perhaps the older individuals in Jackson and Rucks' and Coakley and White's studies felt more responsible for their own transportation and financial support, whereas the girls in the present study really saw these issues as their parents' responsibility.

While parents often influenced initiating participation, once girls joined an activity, it was something about the experience that led the girls to cease participation (Butcher, 1983; Dahlgren, 1988; Eccles & Harold, 1991, Howard & Madrigal, 1990, cited in Hultsman, 1993a; Sopinka, 1984). This was also true for the girls in the current study. Leaders were an important part of this experience.

Leaders

The literature contains little information on the influence of leaders on girls' decisions regarding free time physical activity participation. Hultsman (1993b) found that early adolescents identified not liking the leader as a reason for not beginning new activities and for not continuing participation in leisure activities (1993b) but this was much more influential in decisions to withdraw (1993a). Similarly, the informants in the present study identified leaders as a major influence in their decision to commit, as leaders largely determined the girls' experiences in the activity. They did not identify leaders as a factor in decisions to try (initiate) or not try an activity because usually leaders were not known.

The adolescents in Jackson and Rucks' study (1995) did not report leaders as being important in their participation decisions but many of the leisure time activities they were deciding about did not have leaders (e.g., street hockey, swimming not in a program, running). Jackson and Rucks' (1993) study used a Likert scale to measure reasons for ceasing participation and barriers to initiating participation in leisure activities and leaders were not a choice. There is some literature regarding other aspects of leadership (e.g., the impact of female leaders as role models) (Kluka, 1994; Lirgg, 1992) and the effect of feedback on intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1992; Frederick & Ryan, 1995) but little on how leaders affect girls' enjoyment or experience of the physical activity, which is what the informants in this study said was important.

Opportunities

For a girl to make a decision to try a physical activity in her free time, an opportunity to do so must exist and she must be aware of it. Much of the current literature suggests that inaccessibility of facilities is a constraint to girls' and women's participation in physical activity. This inaccessibility was due to geographical inaccessibility (Jackson & Rucks, 1995; LeClair, 1992), unavailability and lack of facilities (Henderson et al., 1988; Jackson & Rucks, 1995), and cost (Coakley & White, 1992). As discussed previously in the "Parents' Influence" section (p. 160), the girls in the current study did not identify transportation and cost of activities as problems. In fact, the girls in the current study did not identify any inaccessibility of opportunities as stopping them from participating in activities in which they were interested. Again, perhaps the socioeconomic status of the girls in the current study influenced their perceptions of the availability of opportunities.

Experience

In the current study experience influenced girls' decisions to try or not to try a free time physical activity. The informants reported that experience and exposure gave them awareness of opportunities, opportunities to develop skills, and affected what they liked by shaping their preferences. These findings are consistent with current literature. For instance, Eccles and Harold (1991) also found that parents "screened" opportunities for their daughters, thus determining which activities their daughters were exposed to and became aware of. In support of the finding in the present study that experience and exposure gave opportunities for skill development, Jackson and Rucks (1995) found that lack of skills was a constraint to participation among adolescents and that lack of skills was related to inexperience.

In the present study, experience referred to girls' previous experiences with physical activity both in terms of what they had been exposed to or tried and what those experiences were like for them. Both aspects of experience were also identified in the literature. Coakley and White (1992) found that young people's decisions regarding participation in sport were influenced by past experiences. Similarly, Henderson et al., (1988) found that bad past experiences were a barrier to recreation in adult women.

Experience and Potential

The girls in the current study also related that experience influenced their perceptions of their potential in specific physical activities. The girls' account of the influence of experience on potential and of potential on decisions regarding trying an activity is congruent with self-efficacy theory (see p. 69) and with Eccles and Harold's (1991) assertion that past experiences influence performance expectations which in turn influence activity choice.

Enjoyment

Not surprisingly, enjoyment was a major consideration in the girls' decisions regarding free time physical activity participation both in the literature (Browne, 1992; Canada Fitness Survey, 1983; Fox, 1991; Weiss, 1989; Weiss & Frazer, 1995) and in the present study. In previous research, young women reported enjoying the activities themselves, meeting people, being with friends, and learning new skills (Browne, 1992; Dickenson, 1986; Rowland, 1990; Weiss & Fraser, 1995). The girls in the current study confirmed liking these things and also found that leaders and match (p. 127) influenced their enjoyment of physical activities. Interestingly, with the exception of not liking the rules, and not liking the leader (Hultsman, 1993b), the studies of leisure decision making discussed in Chapter II did not identify lack of enjoyment as a reason for not participating.

Match

For a girl to participate in physical activities there must be a match between her skill level, preferences and goals, and the attributes and objectives of a particular program or class.

Girls' Preferences

In general, young women in previous research expressed preferences for individual activities over games; more cooperative, less competitive activities; and activities where the intensity was self regulated and where they were not compared to others (Brown et al., 1989; Canada Fitness Survey, 1983; Cockerill & Hardy, 1987; Dickenson, 1986; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Gill, 1988; McCabe et al., 1991; Raithel, 1988; Ryckman & Hamel, 1995). Findings in the current study differed. As a group, the girls in the current study did not express a preference for any of these things. Preferences for level of difficulty, level of competition, and team versus individual activities varied widely between informants and were reflective of individual choice as opposed to gender. The commonality between previous research and the current study is that both concluded that it was essential for girls' participation that they were able to find a physical activity opportunity which provided the experience they preferred.

Attributes of Activity

The importance of achieving a match between a girls' skill level and the difficulty of a physical activity identified by the girls in the current study supports the idea of optimal challenge present in cognitive evaluation theory (see p. 70).

Potential

In the current study potential referred to a girl's beliefs about what she could do in an activity in the future. As discussed in the "Experience" section (p. 121), during the consideration period, a girl's beliefs about her potential were influenced by her previous experiences and exposure to different activities. When making a decision regarding trying a free time physical activity, potential included both a girl's assessment of her skill level and of her body's capabilities. Other studies have also found that girls' beliefs in their physical abilities and their assessments of whether or not they can meet the challenges of certain tasks are major determinants of attempting the activity (Canada Fitness Study, 1983; Coakley & White, 1992; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Hultsman, 1993b; Welk et al., 1995).

For the decision to commit, potential 2 referred to a girl's assessment of her likelihood of continuing to improve in the activity and was influenced by her feelings of success in addition to an assessment of body and skill. As in the current study, Henderson & Bialeschki (1993) found that individuals who felt successful in an activity wanted to continue participating, and those who did not feel successful were more apt to cease participation. Two main sources of these feelings of success were identified in the literature: perceived competence and improvement.

Perceived competence has been documented in the literature as a major distinguishing factor between young women who chose to participate in sport and physical activity and those who chose not to. Young women involved in sport rated themselves as skilled in physical activity and believed they could perform successfully (Welk et al., 1995). Girls who did not participate often cited lack of sufficient skills as their reason (Browne, 1992; Coakley & White, 1992; Cockerill & Hardy, 1987; Henderson et al., 1988; Hultsman, 1993b; Jackson & Rucks, 1993; Jackson & Rucks, 1995; Sopinka, 1984). This perceived incompetence was a common reason for not participating in sport and physical activity (Browne; Cockerill & Hardy; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Fox, 1988; Raithel, 1988; Rowland, 1990; Welk et al.). Cognitive evaluation theory suggests that feeling competent contributes to deciding to commit to an activity by increasing intrinsic motivation and feeling incompetent has the opposite effect (Deci & Ryan, 1992; Frederick & Ryan, 1995).

Girls' experiences of doing well in the current study are congruent with the aspect of perceived competence referring to performing successfully. The part of perceived competence dealing with a girl's assessment of her skills was identified as part of potential by the girls in the current study and is discussed in the previous section. Although the "breakdown" of these components (i.e., assessments of physical skill and future performance) are classified differently in the current study and in the literature, I believe that the girls' experience of these components is the same.

Girls in both the present study and the literature identified improvement as another factor which contributed to feeling successful. When girls felt they were improving, they felt successful and wanted to continue participating. Conversely, girls disliked participating in activities when they felt they were not making progress (Cockerill & Hardy, 1987). In agreement with findings in the present study, improvement and learning have been identified in the literature as common reasons for girls' participation in physical activity (Browne, 1992; Ryckman & Hamel, 1995).

Interestingly, this striving for growth and improvement was not motivated by the desire to win. Ryckman and Hamel (1995) referred to this as "personal development competitiveness" and found it to be the main predictor of sports participation for girls. Personal development competitiveness "... refers to an attitude in which the major focus is not on winning, but rather in using the competitive experience to facilitate personal growth" (Ryckman & Hamel, p. 387). Weiss and Frazer (1995) also identified mastery as an important reason for participating among junior high aged female basketball players. As can be seen, although the terms are different (perceptions of competency and improvement in the literature versus doing well and growth and improvement in the current study), they reflect similar influences. The following statements from the current study illustrate perceptions of competence and improvement as referred to in the literature.

> So like, I was really successful the first year and that was really good, it kept me going. (D1)
>
> I think also if you're good at the sport, then it encourages you, sort of, mentally. (C1)
>
> Like you're not very good at sports and people say you're not ... you kind of don't want to go back. (H2)
>
> ... With figure skating, uh, we had to do jumps and stuff and I didn't like it much 'cause I kept on falling and stuff [so she quit]. (E2)
>
> And I knew I could do it and I was pretty good. And I thought it was a lot of fun so I just kept doing it... (P2)
>
> ... It was just fun ... learning basic skills because I hadn't played basketball ever before. (D1)

Self-Confidence

The girls in the current study cited lack of self-confidence as a reason for not trying an activity. Lack of self-confidence was also identified in the literature as a constraint to participation in adolescents (Jackson & Rucks, 1995) and women (Henderson et al., 1988).

Different Factors

Some factors influencing girls' decisions regarding participation or non-participation in physical activity were identified only either in the current study or in the literature. Factors identified in the literature and not in the current study included not liking the rules, health, and concerns about the transition to adulthood. Personality was an influence identified only in the current study.

Not Liking the Rules

Hultsman (1993b) found that early adolescents cited not liking the rules as a reason for not beginning new activities and for not continuing participation in leisure activities. This was not mentioned as such in the current study but may have been one reason for not enjoying an activity or not liking the leader.

Health Problems

With the exception of one girl who said an injured hip had influenced her decision to quit a less-preferred activity to preserve her hip for her favorite activity, the girls in the current study did not identify health as a concern. However, health problems were a constraint to participation in the literature both for women (e.g., Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993; Henderson et al., 1988), and for adolescents (e.g., Hultsman, 1993a; Hultsman, 1993b; Jackson & Rucks, 1993; Jackson & Rucks, 1995). In comparison to the women, the girls in this study may simply have had less "wear and tear" on their bodies. There are several possible explanations for the difference in response between the girls in the present study and the adolescents in the other studies.

Involvement in different types of activities is one explanation. Only one girl in the present study was involved in a contact sport (wrestling). Perhaps contact sports were more common in the other studies. In the other studies, responses to this constraint were not broken down by gender. It is possible that the inclusion of boys' responses contributed to the difference in responses. This seems possible because, in general, boys make up a greater proportion of the participants in some high contact sports more often associated with injury (i.e., ice hockey, full contact football). Another possibility is that the inclusion of high school students in Jackson & Rucks' (1993; 1995) studies made a difference. Given the same starting age, these older subjects would have been involved in physical activity for a longer periods of time, providing more opportunity for them to be injured.

Transition to Adulthood

Coakley and White (1992) found that young people were more apt to make a decision to participate in a sport if they associated that activity with the transition to adulthood. For example, some activities were seen to "prepare them for adult roles or give them opportunities to do adult things (i.e, to be independent and autonomous)" (Coakley & White, 1992, p. 24). Although some girls in the present study mentioned plans to become a referee or a lifeguard, none had actually done so and this did not seem to influence the girls current decisions regarding free time physical activity participation. Perhaps this is because the girls in the present study were aged 12-15 years while Coakley and White's subjects ranged in age from 13-23 years.

Personality

How junior high girls make decisions and what they do in their free time "just depends on who you are" (D1). This was a common response in the current study. The informants did not experience a process or a strategy of decision making and they seemed to see each person's decision making as unique. This does not appear to be a common factor in the literature, however possibly different terms were used. For instance, Archer & McDonald (1990) found that girls aged 9-15 years identified personal preference as a reason why girls played certain sports. Also, as mentioned previously, there is little literature specifically regarding physical activity decisions. Another possibility is that there is something about decisions regarding physical activity which results in more options for each person to make a unique decision.

Description of Figure 4: General Decision Making Process

The purpose of this figure, as with this chapter, is to integrate the results of the current study with the literature. Figure 4 is a model of junior high girls' free time physical activity decision making based on the integration of the informants' description of their decision making with self-efficacy theory and cognitive evaluation theory. The symbols in Figure 4 are the same as those in

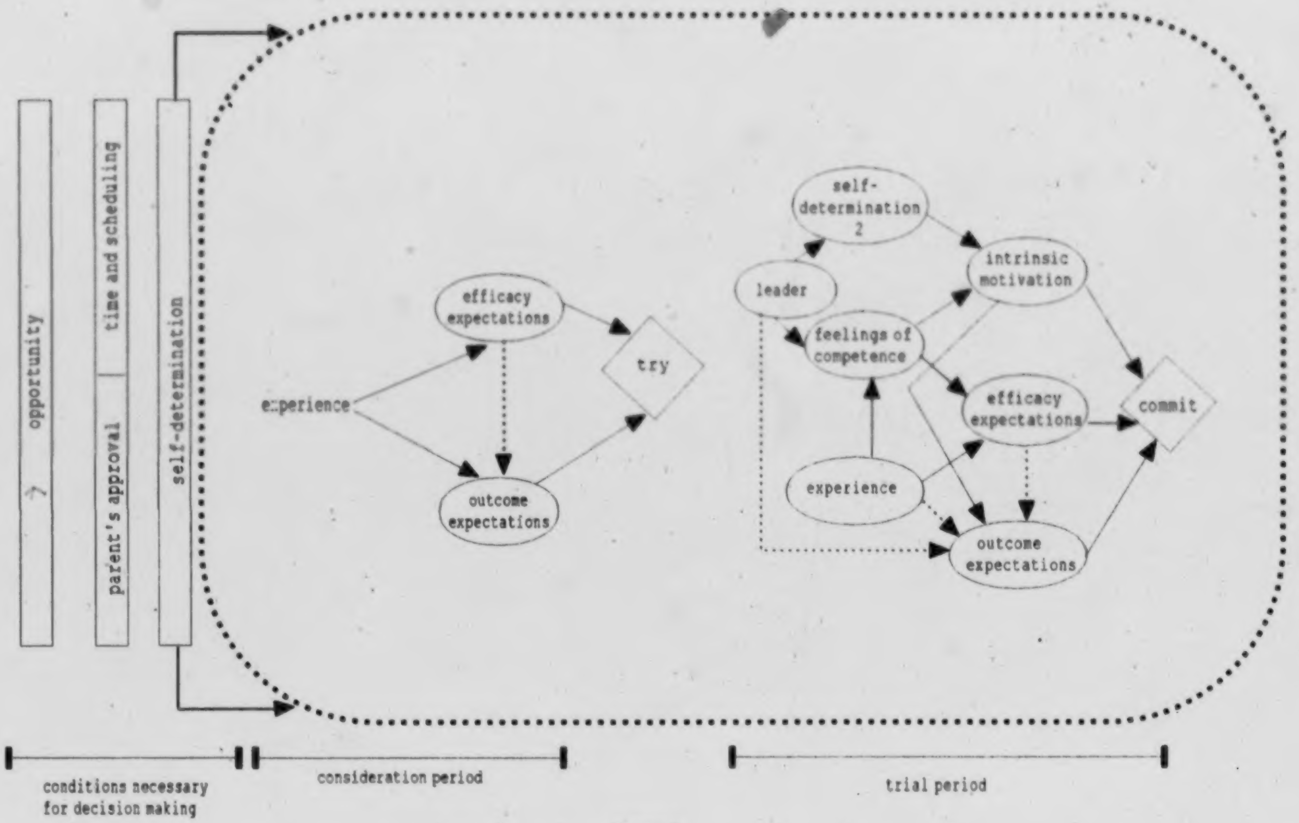
opportunity
parent's approval
time and scheduling
self-determination
experience
efficacy expectations
outcome expectations
try
leader
self-determination 2
feelings of competence
intrinsic motivation
experience
efficacy expectations
outcome expectations
commit
conditions necessary for decision making
consideration period
trial period

Figure 4
Model of Girls' Physical Activity Decision Making

Figure 2. The diamonds represent decision points (to try the activity and to commit to it). In order for a girl to make the decision to participate in a free time physical activity, each of the essential factors in the ovals must be evaluated positively. If any are evaluated negatively, the result will be a decision not to participate in physical activity. The factors not in ovals are modifying factors that are not essential to the decision making process but which influence essential factors. Solid lines represent influences that are an essential part of every decision. Broken lines represent influences that may or may not be present. The arrows indicate the direction of influence.

Figure 4 is more hierarchical than Figure 2. While the girls in the current study experienced considering many factors simultaneously, this model takes the perspective that some factors are necessary for a decision to be made. For instance, a physical activity opportunity must be present for a girl to consider whether or not she would like to participate. Without an opportunity, there is no decision to be made. If there is an opportunity, three other conditions must be satisfied in order for decision making to proceed. The girl must have or believe that she can get parental approval to participate and she must believe that she can fit the new activity into her schedule. If a parent forbids participation or if the girl does not believe that she can fit the new activity into her life, the decision making process ends at that point. The girl no longer feels like she has a choice to participate.

In addition to these conditions, the girl has to believe that she is the one making the decision (i.e., that she has self-determination). Self-determination is represented by the broken circle around the decision making process because the perception of self-determination is necessary throughout the process. The circle is broken because a girl sometimes "allows" parents, friends, and leaders to influence her decisions. It is important to understand that the girl perceives herself in control of the decision making (ultimately still autonomous) because she believes she "screens" these influences and only allows what she wants to affect her.

The Decision to Try

Efficacy Expectations

Efficacy expectations are a girl's beliefs about her ability to perform a specific behaviour in a specific context. For the decision to try, these efficacy expectations are her beliefs about her ability to meet the demands of specific tasks in a particular physical activity program, class or situation. Efficacy expectations are similar to the factors self-confidence and potential in Figure 2 and are influenced by experience as described in Chapter IV (see p. 120-123). These efficacy expectations may influence outcome expectations.

Outcome Expectations

Outcome expectations refer to a girl's perceptions of the specific consequences that will result from her attempting the activities in a particular physical activity program, class or situation. The girl evaluates her likelihood of having friends in the activity and her likelihood of enjoying the activity. These factors are described in greater detail in Chapter IV (see p. 112, 119). These outcome expectations are influenced by experience as described in Chapter IV (see p. 121).

The Decision to Commit

Leader

The leader influences a girl's perception of self-determination through allowing or disallowing her input into the physical activity program. When leaders listen to and act upon a girl's ideas and offer her choices, the girl's perception of self-determination increases. When a girl feels that the leader just orders her around and tries to control her, the girl's perception of self-determination decreases. Through feedback, the leader also influences a girl's feelings of competence (see p. 71).

In addition to influencing girls' feelings of self-determination and competence, leaders also influence outcome expectations regarding enjoyment. Leaders' influence on self-determination and competence does not account for all that comes from "being a good friend". Support, encouragement, respect for each girl as a person, and being fun to be with are also important in girls' enjoyment of physical activity.

Intrinsic Motivation

The more a girl is intrinsically motivated, the more likely it is that she will freely choose to commit to free time physical activity participation. Intrinsic motivation is influenced by self-determination and feelings of competence. Self-determination 2 for the decision to commit includes autonomy both in deciding whether or not to participate and, if participating, how to participate (i.e., some aspect of input or choices within the physical activity program). Feelings of competence refer to how a girl feels about her skills and abilities relative to a specific physical activity.

Feelings of competence are influenced by the level of challenge in an activity. Feelings of competence increase when a girl is given optimal challenges in relation to her skill level. Feelings of competence are based on past experiences, especially assessments of doing well and growth and improvement as described in Chapter IV (p. 139-142).

Experience

For the decision to commit, a girl's experience includes feeling successful, doing well, growth and improvement, and enjoyment. These elements of experience are described in detail in Chapter IV (p. 138-142, 143-146).

All of the components of match (see p. 127) contribute to a girl's experience of enjoyment. Experience influences a girl's feelings of competence, efficacy expectations and outcome expectations.

Efficacy Expectations

As for the decision to try, efficacy expectations for the decision to commit relate to a girl's belief in her ability to meet the demands of specific tasks in a physical activity program, class or situation. These efficacy expectations may influence outcome expectations.

Outcome Expectations

For the decision to commit, a girl's outcome expectations include her expectations regarding: improvement in the activity, enjoyment, and, for some, winning and being competitive. These outcome expectations regarding improvement are the same as potential 2 in Figure 2 (p. 107). Outcome expectations regarding improvement are influenced by experience with the activity and feeling successful (see p. 138). An exception to having an outcome expectation for improvement could occur in activities where participation is "only for fun" and in those activities that are preferred because they are easy (i.e., playing at the local pool). This exception is related to the preferred level of difficulty component of match in Chapter IV (see p. 128).

Outcome expectations regarding enjoyment are the girl's beliefs about whether or not she will like the activity if she commits to it. The girl's outcome expectations regarding enjoyment are influenced by intrinsic motivation, the leader, and sometimes by efficacy expectations. Outcome expectations regarding enjoyment are also influenced by past experiences in the activity including feeling successful (see p. 138), whether or not the girl has friends in the activity, and whether or not the goals and objectives of the particular physical activity program match her preferences and goals.

Whether or not a girl has an outcome expectation regarding winning and being competitive depends on her preferred level of competition (with those who are more competitive more likely to have outcome expectations regarding winning and being competitive) and her level of involvement (with those involved at community league levels less concerned with expectations regarding winning and being competitive and those involved at club and elite levels more concerned with these expectations). Experience with doing well and growth and improvement (see p. 139-142) may also influence expectations regarding winning and being competitive.

Intrinsic motivation, efficacy expectations, and outcome expectations all directly influence the decision regarding committing to a free time physical activity. This model integrates the informants' lived experience of free time physical activity decision making with theoretical constructs from the theories of self-efficacy and cognitive evaluation theory.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a consideration of the findings of the current study in relation to the current literature. The dependability and trustworthiness of some findings in the current study are increased by their similarity with other research findings. These include: time and scheduling, the influence of parents and friends, opportunities, experience, enjoyment, potential, feeling successful, and self-confidence. Some findings were unique to the current study. Leaders appeared to be more influential in the decisions of girls in the current study than in the decisions of those in other studies. As illustrated in the "Match" section (p. 127) the girls in the current study had more diverse preferences for types of activities than girls in previous studies (see p. 31). Finally, the girls in the current study identified personality as a factor in their decisions which girls in other studies did not do. Implications of these findings will be considered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

This study used the grounded theory method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to explore and describe the process through which junior high girls made decisions to participate or not to participate in free time physical activity. Although they reported that they did not use a deliberate decision making process, the informants were clear that their decisions to try or not try a particular physical activity were influenced by time and scheduling, parents, friends, opportunity, enjoyment, and self-confidence. These factors in combination with leader, match, feeling successful, and potential influenced the girls' decisions to commit or not commit to a particular activity. In this chapter, limitations of this study and suggestions for future research are discussed. This is followed by consideration of the implications of the findings of this study for programming physical activities for junior high girls and a few concluding comments.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research

The conclusions identified above and in Chapter IV are obviously limited to the present study. During the course of this research, questions arose that were beyond the scope of this study. Some questions resulted from limitations of method. Other questions were triggered during the process of analyzing data as I became aware of and curious about other paths to be explored.

Questions Resulting From Limitations of Method

Grounded theory methodology looks deeply at the particular and considers experiences as they occur in every day life. Two aspects of grounded theory could be considered limiting in this study. First, to achieve depth, a small number of informants (9) offered rich detailed descriptions of their experiences with physical activity decision making. Second, this study relied on self report.

Although I tried to recruit informants from as diverse backgrounds as possible, and although I was not attempting to recruit a representative sample, this study may be limited by the fact that the informants were a fairly homogeneous group. All came from middle class families and had both parents involved in their lives, were Caucasian, were born in Canada, lived within a 45 minute drive of a mid-sized Canadian city, and were still in school.

I believe that saturation was achieved within the boundaries of this study. However, there are other aspects of teenage girls' decisions which were not explored or which might have been different given a less homogeneous sample. For instance, although no relationships among the different components of match (e.g., personality, level of difficulty, level of competition, team versus individual activities, and importance of variety), were evident in this study, it is possible that some might have emerged in a larger, more diverse sample. Further, I am curious to know if the stereotypical teenage girl "others" referred to by some of the informants actually exist (i.e., the boy-crazy ones who always do things just because their friends are) and if so, if their decision making process differs from the one experienced by the informants.

None of the girls in the current study were overweight. Although body image was not cited as a factor by the informants in this study, it would have been interesting to see if this was true for overweight girls given the current literature on adolescent girls' general preoccupation with their appearance. Given the fact that girls in the present study did not identify any differences in the influence of mothers versus fathers, it might be interesting to explore whether girls who had primary contact with a parent or guardian of only one gender experience parental influence differently. Also, it would be important for future studies to investigate free time physical activity decision making in girls from low income families.

As far as self-report is concerned, it is possible that some aspects of decisions regarding free time physical activity participation are not conscious and therefore the girls were not aware of them, and could not share them with me. This is a potential limitation of qualitative research but the trade-off is a richer understanding of how the girls themselves experienced these decisions and I believe that this understanding was an important aspect of this exploratory study.

Questions Triggered During the Research Process

During the research process, questions arose. Some of these questions were in relation to emerging theory and became a guide to further data collection. Others were beyond the scope of this study and may be a guide for future research.

One area for future research would be to explore junior high school girls' experiences with decision making in general and the influence of this upon the process by which they make decisions regarding physical activity participation. During the study I wondered how much experience some of the girls, particularly the younger ones, had with decision making. For instance, often when I called to make an appointment with the girls, even for the second interviews, I could hear them turn from the phone and ask their moms when they should do it. This was in spite of the fact that they did not need transportation and sometimes their moms were not home at the time of the second interview. Another incident that contributed to my curiosity was that as I was gathering my things to leave one of the interviews, the girl was getting ready to go to a soccer practice and her mom was telling her which socks to wear.

This study did not explore the long term consequences of girls' decisions not to try a particular physical activity. What happens after a girl makes this decision? Does this influence other decisions regarding physical activity participation in ways other than by lack of experience? If so, how? A longitudinal study would help in understanding this.

The process the girls described in this study is more suited to structured activities. Although it also works for unstructured activities, the girls gave much more information about structured activities. I did not restrict this study to organized activities, nor did I encourage the girls to focus on this type of activity. It is possible that these are simply the kind of activities that junior high school girls are most involved with. Perhaps future research could investigate unstructured activities.

Another area which I think would be fascinating for future research is the role of leaders in girls' decisions and physical activity experiences. This is not one of the more common influences addressed in the literature and yet the girls in this study identified it as very important. It would be interesting to know if other girls feel this way and if influence is related to level of involvement. Some of the girls in the current study felt that coaches and teachers were especially important for first physical activity experiences but it is also true that at more advanced levels, girls tend to spend more time with their leaders.

Future research could also explore this phenomena from the perspective of the coaches. Do they know they have this tremendous influence? Do they know that girls want their leader to be "a good friend"? How do they feel about this? Are current leadership and coaching development programs dealing with these issues? In what way?

Implications of This Study for Programming

The current study suggests many implications for programming physical activities for junior high girls. These include providing something for everyone; raising awareness of opportunities; providing opportunities for success; developing positive experiences; recognizing the importance of enjoyment and leaders; and considering significant others.

Providing Something for Everyone

Both previous research and the current study found that for a girl to make a decision to commit to a physical activity, there must be a match between her skill level, preferences and goals, and the attributes and objectives of the particular program or class. It was evident in each component of match (see p. 127) that there was great variation in the kinds of a programs preferred by different junior high girls. The implication of these diverse personal preferences is that no one program can meet the needs of all of the girls. A wide variety of programs featuring different activities, levels of difficulty, and levels of competition must be offered. Also, it is important that opportunities for participation at different skill levels are available to the girls. This should ensure that there is an opportunity for everyone to participate and achieve success.

Another implication of the girls' differences in preferences is that programmers need to be aware of the characteristics of their particular population. Programmers cannot assume that they know what a given group of teenage girls would like. Programmers and leaders should also become aware of other opportunities in the area to avoid duplication and to enable them to suggest alternate programs should it become apparent that their program is not matching the needs and interests of some of the girls in attendance.

Providing a variety of opportunities also enables girls to be exposed to a number of different opportunities and build a broad base of experience. This is important because experience and exposure give awareness of opportunities, give opportunities to develop skills, and affect what girls like by shaping their preferences.

Awareness of Opportunities

Not only must these different opportunities for girls' involvement in physical activity exist, the girls must be aware of them. Many of the informants said that they do not search for opportunities. This means that programmers must make opportunities obvious and take their programs to the girls rather than expecting the girls to come to the program, especially initially. Ways of making the opportunity obvious include advertising in the places girls are: through schools, or, to be more efficient, advertising to a group of girls who have already expressed a preference for the kind of opportunity the new program is providing (i.e., advertising indoor soccer to the girls in outdoor soccer leagues). The disadvantage to using only the latter suggestion is that no newcomers will be recruited.

Once girls have tried an activity and know they like it, the effort that it takes to participate may seem worthwhile but this is not true for initiation when they do not know if they like the activity. This also relates to the girls' comments about lack of time as the main obstacle to trying an activity. Once the informants knew they enjoyed an activity they went to great effort to participate and were often able to find or make time for the activity.

Opportunities to Feel Successful

Both previous research and the current study found that feeling successful in the activity was necessary for a girl to make the decision to commit to it. This means that it is important to provide young women with opportunities to feel successful. One way of doing this is to ensure that each girl has the opportunity to participate in activities where there is a match between her skill level and the level of skill that the activity demands. Participating at her own skill level should enable her to perform well and improve her skills, both of which may contribute to her feeling successful in the activity.

Given limited resources and opportunities, it is not feasible to provide a physical activity program for every possible skill increment. In this case, another way of increasing the chances of a girl improving and doing well and thus feeling successful in physical activity is to intervene early with motor skill programs and prepare every girl with the basic skills required for participation. Teaching motor skill development is important not only in providing the "tools" necessary for participation but also in providing opportunities for success which lead to confidence in performing physical activities (Lirgg, 1992). This confidence in turn may lead to higher evaluations of potential.

Experience

As discussed in the "Experience" section of Chapter V (p. 164), experience influences potential and once a girl has a perception about her potential (due to past experience in the case of a decision about trying or experience in the activity in a decision about committing), this influences her decisions about participation. However, some junior high school girls do not yet have a perception of their potential in specific activities. Thus, programmers have an opportunity to try to ensure that girls' first physical activity experiences are positive ones. Initial success is especially important and affects decisions about committing to specific activities. As well, these positive experiences will decrease the likelihood that potential will be evaluated negatively in subsequent decisions regarding trying physical activities.

Enjoyment

Enjoyment was the factor that the girls identified as most essential to participation. In the end, much of decision making came down to "will I or do I like it?". Two implications arise from this understanding. First, those trying to recruit girls to physical activity programs should promote the programs as fun and enjoyable. Second, every effort should be made not to interfere with girls' enjoyment of physical activity programs. This means, as described in Chapter IV (p. 143), looking after the many other factors (friends, potential, leader, match, feeling successful) which influence physical activity decision making through their influence on enjoyment.

Leaders

The girls identified leaders as very important in their decisions regarding physical activity participation. Leaders need to be aware of the strong impact that they have. The girls regarded the "technical" aspects of coaching and teaching (i.e., helping improve sport skills) as very much secondary to being a good friend and treating them with respect. Thus, leadership and coaching development should focus on ways of fostering this relationship between participants and leaders.

Significant Others

It is important to consider the influence of parents and friends in girls' decisions regarding physical activity participation. Friends and parents were often the source of information about a physical activity opportunity and parents set the boundaries of the girls' choices. Thus, promotion of physical activity for junior high school girls should target not only the girls themselves but also their parents and friends.

The girls in the current study reported that once they joined an activity, being with friends was one of the best things about their free time physical activity. Friends made the activity fun. And enjoying being with friends was one of the things that made them decide to commit to activities. The implication of this is that programmers should provide opportunities for socialization within the physical activity program. Also, because girls may try the activity believing that they can make a friend but will not commit unless they have a friend in the activity, programmers should create situations that are likely to help friendships develop. For instance, coaches might pair "old" and "new" team members for drills to enable the new members to get to know other participants and avoid the situation described below.

> ... Whenever anybody had to go and find a partner, (MP2: Mm.) I was always the one who didn't have one ... the last one to get a partner, 'cause I had to find who was left. (MP2: Mm.) Because I didn't know anybody. (P2)

Understanding the process by which junior high girls make decisions regarding trying and committing to free time physical activities and considering the implications of that process in programming should enable development of programs more likely to result in girls making decisions to participate in free time physical activity.

Concluding Comments

The informants in the current work have offered insight, first hand experience, and an eagerness to explore the issue of girls' free time activity participation. Their contributions are gifts to all of those working to promote physical activity. In some cases the informants confirmed the findings of previous research. In other instances they have offered their own unique perspective on free time physical activity decision making as junior high school girls in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, in 1996. Their insights may enable the development of better physical activity programs for teenage girls, thus increasing participation and improving health.

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Appendix A
Questionnaire

Name:

Address:

Age:

Grade:

Ethnic Heritage:

Please provide a brief description of the activities which you have done in your free time (name of the activity, when did you do it?, for how long?).

Appendix B

Examples of Initial Individual Interview Questions

My actual interviews were unstructured. These are examples of the kinds of questions asked and topics covered. The indented parts are probes that I used only after the girls had had a chance to respond to the main question.

Interview 1

1. Tell me about your favourite thing to do when you are not in school.
    What do you like about it?

2. What other activities are you involved in outside of school?
    What other interests do you have?
    Tell me what you like about them.
    Are there things you do not like about them? If yes, please describe them.

3. Do you experience any difficulties in participating in any of your free-time activities?
    If yes, what difficulties? Please describe them.
    What have you done/ do you do to overcome them?

4. Tell me about some activities that you are not interested in.
    How did you decide that you were not interested?
    What is it about these activities that you don't like or that doesn't appeal to you?
    Think about activities that you know some of your classmates do but that you don't. How did you decide not to do them?

5. Are there some activities that you are interested in but that you are not currently doing. If yes, tell me about them.
    What keeps you from doing them?

6. (If she did not mention any physical activities in the above questions.) You didn't mention any sports or physical activities. What are your thoughts or feelings about them?

7. Tell me about a time when you decided to try a new activity.
    How did you decide to try it?
    What made you decide to try it?

8. Tell me about an activity that you tried and then stopped.
How did you decide to stop?
What made you decide to stop?

9. Do you feel that you made a good choice when you decided about those activities?
How can you tell when you've made a good choice?
When/how do you know that something is not a good choice?

10. Are there things that have helped you to be physically active?
What were they?

11. Are there things that have got in the way of you being physically active?
What were they?

12. If there were a new physical activity or sports program in your community, would you consider joining?
-If no, why or "because..."
-If yes, what information would you want to help you make your decision? What would be the most important consideration(s)? What would help to make you choose to join? Are there any things you can think of that would definitely make you decide not to join? Can you think of things that people might tell you to try to get you to join but that you wouldn't consider?
-How likely do you think it is that you would join?

13. If there were a new sports or physical activity program at your school, would you consider joining?
-If no, why or "because..."
-If yes, what information would you want to help you make your decision? What would be the most important consideration(s)? What would help to make you choose to join? Are there any things you can think of that would definitely make you decide not to join? Can you think of things that people might tell you to try to get you to join but that you wouldn't consider?
-How likely do you think it is that you would join?

14. Are there people who you feel influence your choices about free time activities?
If yes, who are they? How do they influence you? Are some of these people more influential than others? If yes, please tell me about that or can you give me an example? In what situations?

15. What else do you think I should know about this area?
-About how girls decide what to do in their free time?
-Can you think of other things that it would be important for me to know about? What?

16. In the last 7 days have you participated in any physical activity other than your required physical education class?
-If yes, how many times? What activity or activities did you do?
-Would you say that this last week was typical of what you usually do?

Appendix C1
Informant Consent

Free Time Activity Interview
Investigator: Marianne Waters
Phone: 962-0517
Advisor: Dr. Dru Marshall
Phone: 492-1035

The purpose of this study is to learn about how junior high girls make decisions about what they do in their free time because there is some indication that this is related to the kinds of behavior that people engage in later in life. The results of this study may enable more effective development of programs for people your age.

If you agree to participate, I will ask you questions about how you make decisions about what you do in your free time. Each individual interview will take approximately one hour and you will be interviewed 1 to 3 times. Following the individual interviews, I may invite you to participate in one focus group interview. This would involve meeting with a group of girls to give me feedback on my findings. This focus group interview will last approximately 1½ hours. You may volunteer for the individual interviews and not the focus group if you wish. I have received ethical approval for this project. There are no known negative effects of participation. There will be no monetary compensation. You may refuse to answer any questions and may withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences.

Both your identity and your answers will be kept confidential. Each participant will be audio-taped. The information on these tapes will be typed out. Code numbers will be given and no names will appear on the typed copies. Names will not be used in reports or presentations of this study. These tapes and typed copies will not leave the possession of the interviewer. Tapes will be erased and the typed copies of interviews destroyed after seven years as university rules require. The data may be reviewed in the future for another purpose after ethical approval has been attained.

If you have questions at any time, please feel free to contact me at 962-0517.

Informed Consent

I, ______________________, voluntarily consent to participate in the Free Time Activity research being conducted by Marianne Waters, a graduate student at the University of Alberta, according to the conditions above. I also acknowledge that I have received a copy of this agreement.

Signature _______________________ Date ___________________

Investigator's Signature ________________ Date ______________

Appendix C2
Parental Letter and Consent Form

Free Time Activity Interview
Investigator: Marianne Waters
Phone: 962-0517
Advisor: Dr. Dru Marshall
Phone: 492-1035

Date

Dear Parent or Guardian:

I am a graduate student at the University of Alberta. I am interested in how girls make decisions because there is some indication that this is related to the kinds of behavior that they will engage in later in life. I am particularly interested in junior high girls' decisions about extracurricular and free-time activities and I would like to interview your daughter about her thoughts, feelings and experiences with this matter. The results of this study may enable more effective development of programs for girls of this age.

Each individual interview will take approximately one hour and each girl will be interviewed 1 to 3 times. Following the individual interviews, I will invite some of the girls who were interviewed individually to participate in one focus group interview. This will involve meeting with a group of girls to give me feedback on my findings. This focus group interview will last approximately 1½ hours. I have received ethical approval for this project. There are no known negative effects of participation. There will be no monetary compensation. Participants may refuse to answer any questions and may withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences.

Both the identity of the participant and her answers will be kept confidential. Each participant will be audio-taped. The information on these tapes will be typed out. Code numbers will be given and no names will appear on the typed copies. Names will not be used in reports or presentations of this study. These tapes and typed copies will not leave the possession of the interviewer. The tapes and typed copies will be retained for seven years as per university policy and destroyed after this time. The data may be reviewed in the future for another purpose after ethical approval has been attained.

To give permission for your daughter to be interviewed, please sign the attached Parental Consent Form. I would be happy to provide you with a copy if you wish.

Please feel free to contact me at 962-0517 if you have any questions. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,
Marianne Waters

Parental Consent Form

If my daughter wants to participate in this study,
I, ______________________, consent to allow my daughter,

___________________, to participate in this study according to the conditions described on the previous page and acknowledge that I have been offered a copy of this consent form.

Parent's Signature ______________________ Date _____________

Witness' Signature ______________________ Date _____________

Investigator's Signature ________________ Date _____________